

Our perfect salvation

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[0:00] Well, good morning everybody and welcome to this pre-recorded service for the 25th October 2020! From Calgary Church here in Brighton on the south coast of England. As you can see we're still meeting by YouTube, but we have been progressing plans for careful and cautious opening so that we trust we'll be able to meet together before too long in some shape or form. So if you're just dropping in, let me say the usual introduction. We're based here in the UK. We're a church of, when we used to meet in normal times, 70 to 80 people. My name's Philip Wells. I'm an elder at the church here and I'm leading and speaking this morning.

Our subject is going to be the perfect salvation because we're going to be looking at something from the letter to the Hebrews which talks about things that are perfect and the plan is up on the screen there of what we're going to do.

Those of you who know the church know that we're going through a rather stormy time at the moment, but this morning I want to encourage us to look not at the wind and the waves, but at our perfect saviour, Jesus Christ, who has achieved a perfect salvation.

And may God help us to focus on that. Well, the plan's up on the screen there and in a moment we'll sing, but first let's pray together. Almighty God, we come in the midst of storms and perplexity. I'm very conscious of our utter dependence upon you. But please show us today how very adequate you are and sufficient for the needs of us, your people.

[1:59] Thank you that you are sufficient to forgive all our sins. Thank you that you are sufficient to put new life within us and to keep that inner life working and going to the end.

Thank you that you are sufficient to give us all the help we need at any particular time. Thank you that you are sufficient to keep us together and bring us all safe home with great joy and rejoicing. Show us these things, we pray, through Jesus Christ. Amen. Now we're going to sing Psalm 100, which is the one that says, Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving. And his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good.

[3:05] And his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations. So let's sing Psalm 100, praise version 100a.

All people that on earth do dwell. All people that on earth do dwell.

Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Serve him with joy.

His praises tell. Come now before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed. He formed us all without our aid.

[4:16] We are the flock he loves to feed. As sheep who by his hand are made.

O enter then his gates with praise. And in his courts his love proclaim.

Give thanks and bless him all your days. Let every tongue confess his name.

The Lord of mighty God is good. His mercy is forever sure.

His truth at all times firmly stood. And shall promise to age and all.

[5:35] Now we're going to pray a prayer. And I invite you again to pray the Lord's Prayer out loud. When we come to the end of the prayer. Which

I will lead us in just now.

So let us pray. Let's first come in a prayer of adoration. We come to praise you God the Father. The one who loves us.

And has saved us. The one who will not be satisfied. Until each of your people is brought home safe to glory. And is raised with Christ on the last day.

In glorious fulfilment. We praise the Heavenly Father. We come to confess sins. We confess sins of thought and word and deed.

Sins of commission and omission. We don't want to minimise our sins or to ignore them. But ask you to give us continual and progressive repentance.

[6:38] Help us to grow up and to grow down. To become more like Jesus. Not just in our outward behaviour. But in the very deep processes of our hearts.

Open our eyes we pray to the realities of Christ's power over our sin. And the forgiveness that he gives us through his shed blood.

We come in thankfulness. We want to be grateful people. We don't want to be just complaining and low as a permanent thing.

We know you lead us through different times. But deliver us from ingratitude. Deliver us from questioning your wisdom in the way you've arranged our lives. Deliver us from the temptation of finding fault with you.

Or of what you've given us or where you've put us. But help us to trust you in all these things. That you are the good God who does not lead us the wrong way. The Lord gives.

[7:40] The Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And as we come to you with thankfulness. We want to pray that you will help us to be thankful. Help us to rejoice in the many things we should rejoice in.

And give us grateful hearts. We come in supplication. We pray for help in our time of need. We pray for eyes to see.

Not only the things that are saddening. And the things that are of loss. But also the things that are positive. We ask that you give us eyes to see who Jesus is.

And to see his grandeur. Give us eyes to see what a huge step he took when he stepped down from heaven. To become one of us. Born all those years ago in the Middle Eastern stable.

Give us eyes to see the magnitude of what he achieved when he died on the cross. How the earth shook. And time was creased down the middle. When the last day arrived ahead of time.

[8:44] When Jesus died. Give us eyes to see. By faith where we are headed. And how glorious it will be. Through the power of the resurrection of Jesus.

And we pray in supplication for our world in all its need. We pray for leaders and governors across the nations and in our own nation.

Help them to lead well. And we pray that our nations would not be suffering and not be fragmented at this particular time. But we would be putting trust in you.

The only true God. Pray for our own city. Have mercy on our city. Which has many creative, caring people.

And yet so few who actually know Jesus Christ and put their trust in him. Please bless all the gospel churches.

[9:44] Whether they are large and small. Whether they are old or new. Bless them and may they give a true witness to Jesus Christ. Please deliver from every byway.

Deliver from fragmentation. Deliver from backing off the truths of the word of God. Deliver from everything that can. Deliver from sin.

Deliver from everything that would spoil the witness of Jesus Christ. In the churches of Jesus Christ. Give each church faith. Love for one another.

Love for the lost. All the wisdom they need. All the resources they need. And send, we pray, labourers into the harvest. We pray for those who are grieving.

That they may know comfort from the God of all comfort. We pray that as one and another saint finishes his or her race. That he and she may leave behind.

[10:44] Powerful testimony to the power of Jesus Christ in this day and age. Pray for those who have lost their way. And Good Shepherd. Go and bring them back to you.

And we pray in all these things that you would have glory. And show that you are true and real. And that the name of the Heavenly Father should be hallowed.

And that the kingdom of Jesus Christ should come. And your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So we pray these prayers. In the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. And let's pray together the prayer that's on the screen there. Which I started off praying. But let's pray it all together now in full. Our Father in heaven.

Amen. Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

[11:43] And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Well I said we were thinking about the quality, the perfect quality of gospel salvation.

And the wonder of it. Now that's what true biblical religion is all about. It's predicted and foretasted. If there's such a word in the old covenant, the old testament.

It's inaugurated and genuinely experienced in the new covenant. Although it is not completely fulfilled until the world to come. But even now in this world we have assurances.

We taste the glories that are yet to be. And this next song speaks about that. One of the things it says is, Sins forgiven and conscience cleansed.

[12:47] What a wonderful thing that is. Sins forgiven. The things that we've done in the past, however shameful, however awful, however whatever they may be, completely forgiven, completely wiped off the slate as it were.

Sins forgiven and conscience cleansed. Conscience is that inner part of us in which we act as our own judges. And our conscience makes us feel bad.

Or conscience makes us feel rejected. Or our conscience makes us feel unworthy. And tells us that those things are the dominant things in our relationship with God.

And with conscience cleansed, there is some powerful argumentation that says to conscience, No, that judgment that you are making is incorrect.

You should cease that judgment and give liberty of conscience and give the joy of sins forgiven and the wonder of being right with God.

[13:51] And a little voice inside says, Yeah, isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? So we have a liberty in terms of our relationship with God, in terms of our relationship with others, and in terms of our relationship with ourselves.

So we're going to sing, All My Days, I will sing this song of gladness. Aaron's the maestro on this one. Let's sing this together.

All My Days, I will sing this song of gladness.

Give my praise to the fountain of delights. For in my helplessness, You heard my cry.

On waves of mercy poured down on my life. I will trust in the cross of my redeemed.

[15:16] I will sing of the blood that never fails. All sins forgiven, Of cautious glanced, Of death, defeated and life without end Beautiful Savior, wonderful Counselor Lord of majesty, Lord of history You're the way, the truth, the life Star of the morning, the rest in holiness You're the risen one, heaven's champion And you reign, you reign over I long to be where the praise is never ended

Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades Where countless worshippers will share one song And Christ, only one of the Lamb Beautiful Savior, wonderful Counselor Lord of majesty, Lord of history You're the way, the truth, the life Star of the morning, glorious in holiness You're the risen one, heaven's champion And you reign, you reign over Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed Wonderful things to be grateful for We're now going to have a reading from Romans 8, 28-39 Our sentinels are going to read this to us It's a wonderful text Full of defiance, as it were Full of exaltation Filled with amazement at what God has done In and through Jesus Christ If God is for us,

says Paul in this reading Who can be against us?

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? In all these things, in all these things We are more than conquerors So, please listen then As our Sema reads to us From Romans 8, 28-39 Thanks, our Sema Romans 8, 28-39 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him Who have been called according to his purpose For those God foreknew, he also predestined To be conformed to the likeness of his Son That we might be the firstborn among many brothers And those he predestined He also called Those he called, he also justified Those who justified, he also glorified

What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son But gave him up for us all How will he not also, along with him Graciously give us all things?

[19:37] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died More than that Who was raised to life Is at the right hand of God And is also interceding for us Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble Or hardship Or persecution Or famine Or nakedness Or danger Or sword As it is written For your sake We face death all day long We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered No, in all these things We are more than conquerors Through him who loved us For I am convinced Neither death nor life Neither angels nor demons Neither the present Nor the future Nor any powers Neither height nor depth Nor anything else In all creation Will be able to separate us From the love of God That is in Christ Jesus our Lord Amen So thank you for that reading We have been chosen Those whom God has chosen

He has Well it says Those he foreknew He predestined And those he predestined He called Those he called He justified Right with himself In other words And those he justified He glorified He hasn't done that yet But there's a sort of Unbreakable chain there That so Paul can speak to it Speak of it as if it's something already done Glorified If God is for us Who can be against us?

Nothing can separate us He says From the love of God That is in Christ Jesus our Lord And what could be more Impressive And more surprising And actually more convincing And more certain If we've understood The gospel there And we're going to Sing a song Which says This is wonderful To God be the glory Great things he has done So loved he the world That he gave us his son Who yielded his life An atonement for sin And opened the life gate That we may go in So this To God be the glory It's a Panny Crosby song But with the more modern Fellingham tune Which we go straight into the tune So if you need to learn it Maybe you could press the stop button And rewind and go back again Anyway To God be the glory Great things he has done

So loved he the world That he gave us his son Who yielded his life An atonement for sin And opened the life gate That all may go in Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the earth hear his voice Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the people rejoice Come to the Father Through Jesus the Son Give him the glory Great things he has done O perfect redemption

[24:09] The purchase of blood To every believer The promise of God The vilest offender Who truly believes That moment from Jesus A pardon receives Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the earth hear his voice Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the people rejoice Come to the Father Through Jesus the Son Give him the glory Great things he has done Great things he has done

Great things he has taught us Great things he has done And great our rejoicing Through Jesus the Son But purer and higher And greater will be Our wonder, our worship When Jesus we see Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the earth hear his voice Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the people rejoice Come to the Lord Come to the Father Through Jesus the Son Through Jesus the Son Give him the glory Great things he has done To the Mary Let the people rejoice Let the earth hear his voice Let the people rejoice he has done. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

Now we're going to come back to the passage that we've been looking at in some detail, so I'm conscious we've gone a bit slower on this passage than we have in other passages in Hebrews, but I think it is worth it. So Brenda's going to read that to us again, and just remind you that this reading marks the beginning of a new section where he's about to launch off into telling us about the better priesthood, which is the Melchizedek-style priesthood. So he's just going to get going, but before he

really gets into it, he tries to say something to his readers about listening up, and that's the reading. It's Hebrews 5, 7 to 6, 12. Thank you very much, Brenda.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

[28:28] Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss, they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Land that drinks in the rain, often falling on it, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed, receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end, it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case, the things that have to do with you.

with salvation. God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realised. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who, through faith and patience, inherit what has been promised. Well, let's come and look at God's Word together and we'll pray. Lord, we ask that we would hear your Word with great profit and with its transforming power. Help the speaker to be grabbed clearly and strongly by this content and help hear us to be captivated and transformed and amazed by the things, the wonderful things that we find in your Word. So hear our prayers, Lord Jesus, from heaven and act here on earth. We pray according to your great promises. Amen. Well, a little bit of a change around on the camera and everything, but we're going to be looking at Hebrews chapter 6 and the bits that we've been looking at before, just focusing on them. Here's my introduction. It's a book that I remember being referred to. It's a book by Geraint Fielder. I hope I'm pronouncing his name correctly. It's about

[32:39] Christian gospel communication, the communication of the Christian message to students in Wales, 1923 to 1983. So the students, we presume, are people with their heads screwed on properly.

People, as it's described here, with some politeness and respect. Excuse me, Mr. Davis. Some politeness and respect there. And excuse me, Mr. Davis. Hallelujah.

An exclamation of amazement and joy and wonder. It's a little bit like what the Apostle Peter says in his letter, something filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. Something that this student got hold of as if to say, this is amazing. And it's not an expression that comes simply from an extrovert personality. It's not something that comes worked up by music or hype. But there's something here in this exclamation, which is actually of the essence of the true Christian message. There is something in the real, authentic Christian message, which is so glorious, so brilliant, that anybody who's grasped it at some point or another will be thinking, hallelujah.

So that's what we're going to look at. To my mind, there's something very definitely Hebrews about this. I think that I think he would, he would be saying hallelujah. So let's see if we can find out what it is that's going on that makes anybody say hallelujah. So we've been looking at Hebrews and we know there are these warnings, like being near the cliff edge and the warnings say, this is a stupid thing to do to go close, so close to the cliff edge. Don't for one moment say, oh, I can handle this.

It's a, it's a crack, but I can handle that because you can't. Nobody can. You have to get back on the path. It's a warning to Christians to keep on the path. Well, that's the negative side. But Hebrews has some very strong positives and you remember them. It says, therefore, holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. So there's a thing to look carefully at Jesus. There's a similar positive in chapter four, verse 14. Since we have a great high priest who's gone through the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let's hold firmly to the faith that we profess and let us approach the throne of grace with confidence to help us to find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. So there's something very positive there about access to God through Jesus Christ. And it's to do with priests. And so I've just got a little picture of a priest there.

[35:48] And the priest connects between God and heaven and earth, if you like. And that's the role of the priest, to be that connection. Much more to say on that. As indeed the writer says, the point of what we're saying is this, we have a high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven. So there is that connection there. And the letters of the Hebrews is really meditating on the riches and the immense implications of this connection, which is the essence of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So just to remember that we looked at some of these five questions and objections. I won't go through them all again. But this particular one we hadn't looked at. Why does he pick on such an unequal set of elementary principles, his elementary principles? A foundation, he says, repentance from dead works, faith in God, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgment. And you might think that's a very unequal set of things. So we're going to come and look at that as we go on. So my plan is as follows. And dear viewer, dear listener, just as the writer said, we've got a lot to say, but you need to pay careful attention. I think this is true of this particular study that we have just now. You're going to need to pay careful attention. So if you're half doing something on your phone, switch your phone off, pray for help as you listen, and ask God to help us to take all this on board. Well, here we go. We're going to have a careful look at the text. So it will require some careful concentration. I want to try and get a handle on this idea of perfection, of the perfect things in Hebrews. I'll explain about that as we go on. And then I want to look at the elementary principles that have been mentioned. They're there in verse 12. Somebody needs to teach you the elementary truths. Chapter 6, verse 1, the elementary teachings about Christ.

Look at those. Principle A, the dead works one. Principle B, the baptisms one. Principle C, the laying on of hands one. And that's the plan to look at those things. So let's look at the text together. So this is chapter 6, verse 11. He says, we have much to say. And he says, it's hard to explain it because you've become nothros, whatever that is, lazy. You know, you've started to go off the boil and give up and like somebody who can't be bothered to finish a journey. And he says, you ought to be teachers, but you need someone to teach you the elementary principles.

It doesn't use the word truths. It doesn't use the word truths. Actually, the elementary principles, or it's just one word, like the ABC of God's word, sorry, of the beginning of the words of God. That's more literally. You need teaching the elementary principles of the beginning of the words of God. God. And he talks about milk and solid food. And he says in chapter 6, verse 1, let us therefore leave the elementary principles or the beginning of the word of Christ. NIV says, let's leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. So I'm saying it is a little bit more accurate to say, let us leave the beginnings of the word or the message about Christ.

So just to come back to that leave, there are good reasons to say it doesn't mean leave behind, but he means leave in place. So here is something that's been laid down. We leave it in place.

[40:09] It was a beginning of something and we go on. It was the beginning, he says, of the word of Christ. Christ. NIV says elementary teachings about Christ. The beginning of the word of Christ. So we're going to leave that in place as the beginning and we're going to go on.

And what are we going to go on to? He says, go on to maturity. And there's something in that word which we'll come back to, but it's not a word meaning anything to do with age or growth. It is actually the word which means goal or end or usually translated in Hebrews perfection. There's a group of words that are very similar. So here is this perfection word in a slightly different form. And I want to hang on to that perfection thought. So let's, so we've got, we're leaving in place the foundation. That was the beginning of the message of Christ. And let's go on. Let's be carried on to the perfect stuff, which is where it all leads to. And he says, we won't lay again the foundation. Now, where does it say that? In verse one, not laying again the foundation. So we've got a foundation, not going to lay it again. We're going to leave it in place and build up from there. And the foundation, he says, repentance from acts that lead to death or from repentance from dead works and a faith in

God. So I think those two, we're going from dead works to faith and instructions about baptisms. So you're thinking of baptisms. What's all this? Baptism teachings. Come to this baptism thing again. It's a word meaning to, to immerse in water or to, to, to cleanse with a large amount of water. And I think when Brenda read it, she said something about washings, didn't she?

So that's what it says next. And then the laying on of hands or putting on of hands. And you're thinking, is that to do with healing? Is that to do with making elders and deacons?

What's all that about? And then the resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment. So these are foundations that won't lay again, but we'll keep them in place and work on from there. And he says, and God permitting, we will do so. So that idea of God's action in us, in us making this progress.

[42:49] So there is the, uh, the text. And let me just stop on this idea of perfection. Uh, so maturity is what the NIV says. There's a Greek word, if you like, I don't know, teleotes, something like that. Uh, teleos meaning perfect, telos meaning goal. So I want to pick up, I want to say that this word maturity actually picks up on a thread that runs through Hebrews of perfection. And for example, chapter two, verse 10, please look at it. Chapter two, verse 10.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. So here he's saying that the author of salvation, that's to say Jesus, was made perfect through suffering. It gives you a little clue of the way he uses this word perfect. Not meaning that Jesus was sinful before or mistaken, but that he fully qualifies to be exactly the saviour that we need. Not deficient in any way, but absolutely spot on for the sort of saviour that we need. So there's a perfection there in Jesus. And this word perfect gets used in other places too, which we shall see. In other words, as a saviour, he's fully adequate, nothing lacking, totally sufficient, does a brilliant job. You can't fault it. He's absolutely brilliant at the job that he does. So perfect. And we'll pick up on that thought as we go on through. So let's come back then to the elementary principles. So they were there in verse 12. It uses a word to mean basic building blocks, ABC. I won't go into the details of that word. Is he meaning what you teach in Sunday school? Is it that sort of elementary principles? Or if you were going to introduce Christianity to somebody and you're doing the Alpha course or Christianity Explored? Or if you were building, if you're writing a book of doctrine, you know, you're going through whatever his name is, who wrote the book of doctrine, Berkhoff or whoever. And you, is this the first chapter you'd put in the book? Because you say, this is laying on of hands. I mean, we don't teach that in Sunday school.

There's nothing about that in Alpha. I've never, never, ever read a book of doctrine where laying on of hands is, is the, one of the first things that we deal with. So we need to understand that one. And the question of perfection, not sinless perfection, that's what we only get in heaven. But there's something that he's going to talk about that is, belongs to salvation here, which he can say, this is perfect. And that's the bit that I want to try to communicate and say that there's something about the salvation that we now have, which will make you say hallelujah, if you really got it.

[46:16] So let's look at the foundation. We're moving from the foundation to perfection. So I've laid a concrete slab there, not a very straight edged concrete slab, but it's a foundation and you can build on it. And

that's what it's meant to do. And as we've gathered, this elementary, this foundation, chapter six, verse one, is, is to do with Christ and you go on from that foundation to perfection. So let's build on the foundation and let's go towards Christ. Let's leave the foundation in place with the foundation, which is the beginning of the word of Christ. So it's going to lead us to Christ. If we, if we do what this foundation is meant to do, it's the basis which will lead us on to Christ. We go on to perfection. We go on to maturity. So we're going on to perfection.

There we are. Now, what I want to say is this is actually the movement of the letter from what he says, the old, the Aaronic priesthood, the old covenant priesthood, the Moses priesthood to the new thing that comes in with Jesus, which is, as he would say, a Melchizedek style priesthood.

This priesthood is the perfect priesthood. Now, there's a lot to say about Melchizedek and he's only just getting going. So don't be put off by the strange name. But I think this is exactly where he's going. So there's the old priest, the Aaron style priest and all that belongs to him. Well, there's foundation. And let's go on from that to the perfect. Here's a text, chapter 7, verse 11.

Now look at what it says. If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood, for on the basis of it, the law was given to the people. Why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? He's saying the Aaron style priesthood, that's where he says the order of Aaron. If that could bring perfection, then there wouldn't be any need for another priest. But now there is a new style priest in the order of Melchizedek, or as I tend to say, a Melchizedek style priest. And this priest can attain perfection. I mean, if he couldn't, there wouldn't be any point in the upgrade, would there? But there is something perfect about what the Melchizedek style priest does. That's, of course, Jesus, isn't it? Chapter 7, verse 18. The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless. There was something weak about it and useless about it. For the law made nothing perfect, he says in chapter 7, verse 18. But we have something which does have a perfection in it.

[49:30] It does do what it says on the tin, if you like, whereas the old stuff didn't. And if you like to look at chapter 10, verse 2, where he says the law, in verse 1, the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near. So he's saying the old way couldn't make perfect those who draw near. But presumably then, pretty obviously, the new way does.

It makes perfect the people who come through this means. Now, it doesn't make them sinlessly perfect, but it does do something with a brilliant success. And that's really what I'm going to try and describe to us just now. So we're moving from the foundation to the perfection. The perfect comes in Christ. Can't improve on it. So what sort of perfect do we have? Well, as we've said, we have a perfect saviour. Chapter 5, verse 9. Chapter 5, verse 9. 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. So this becoming, as it says, a high priest in the Melchizedek style. So Jesus is a perfect saviour. And I'm meaning to try and convey the freight of this word. He does everything you could possibly expect of him, and he does it brilliantly.

The perfection of the salvation is there because of the perfection of the saviour. He does a brilliant job. He succeeds marvellously where the Aaron style priests, or if you like, the Levitical style priests failed notably. And this perfection is about the success, the quality, or the successful quality of the priesthood that Jesus does. The salvation that he brings. And it's not, as I say, only for the world to come. It's something now, as we draw near to him, there's something that it does with great brilliance. It's a perfect salvation. Chapter 9, verse 9. Chapter 9, verse 9. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. Well, NIV says clear. The original says perfect.

And here's a little stepping stone for us in this. Here's one of the things that it does perfectly. It deals with the conscience of the worshipper perfectly. Now I want to say that's just a wonderful thing. I wish I could describe it eloquently. The old style priesthood, the Levitical style priesthood, was not the real thing. It was the foundation and pointed forward. It gave you the idea of what ought to be done, but it couldn't do it. And as he writes to his hearers now, I mean, they have the priests

presumably still operating. I mean, they're there in the Bible. They're still operating. But now we have the Christ. If you go back to those priests, they have lost their connection with Christ in the sense that they were pointing forward to him. That was the old value. Now he's here. They're an empty husk because the real thing is here. If you go back to those priests, you're going back to an empty husk. And of course, that husk is the same sort of thing that you have in all sorts of religions. A form which doesn't have the real thing in it. And I'll just put some thoughts on this. That sort of religion leaves you unsure and doubtful, whereas the real thing gives you assurance, makes you sure that the conscience is perfected, the conscience is dealt with fully. And it's characteristic of religions that have the same faults as now the Aaronic priesthood would have. It's all about doubts. It's all about exploring the possibility of, but not anything solid whereby you'd say, that's brilliant. Excuse me. Hallelujah.

[54:41] Unsure and doubtful. These sorts of religions, you get them all over the world in different forms, they're out of touch with God. But this perfect saviour and perfect salvation actually and genuinely brings us into touch with God. And when we pray through this perfect priest, he does what a priest ought to do. He actually brings us into contact with God. It isn't just vainly hoping that it might possibly, God might possibly hear our prayers, but we've got this sense that we are genuinely in touch with God. Not out of touch, but in touch with God. And the old style, the Levitical style priesthood, and all the things that are like that, are powerless and weak. And so we have Christianity, so-called, which has the right words, but the power of it is lacking. A form of religion, but the power of it is lacking. It's weak. It doesn't do anything. And you can see countless examples of this. You may well have friends, perhaps relatives and dear ones, who are in a form of religion. But there's no power there. It doesn't change anything. There's no cleansing. There's no changing of the mindset. There's no transformation of life. But this perfect priest does that in this perfect salvation. And the old style religion is hopeless. It doesn't include within it enough conviction to say, I know whom I have believed. And I know he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him until that day. But this perfect sacrifice, this perfect saviour, this perfect high priest, this perfect salvation, says, here is adequate reason to say, I have a hope. And it's not just a vain wishy-washy hope. It's a strong hope. It's like a rock that God has put into my life. He's picked me up from the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock. Well, okay, so a perfect salvation. Now, try to give that idea of the perfect and what's meant by that. And there's a lot more to be said on it. But let's come back to these elementary principles, the ones that were so puzzling. So let's look at them. And I want to say that they're not actually elementary principles in the sense you teach them at Sunday school. They're elementary principles in the sense that they belong to the Aaron-style priesthood.

And they therefore contrast with or lay a foundation for the Melchizedek-style priesthood, which is, of course, the Jesus-style priesthood. So repentance from dead works and faith.

So what are these dead works? And I'd like to link that with chapter 9, verses 13 to 15, where he talks about the old methodology with blood, slaughtering animals, burning them on altars.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. Well, that's the old stuff. It's all outward.

How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences? There's the conscience there. Conscience cleansed from acts that lead to death.

[58:45] Now, there's the dead works from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God. And I want to propose that the acts that lead to death are exactly the things that the Aaron-style priesthood is involved with.

That's ASP, Aaron-style priesthood. And the dead works are the stuff that the Aaron-style priest does. You know, all this about vestments. You get that in forms of Christianity now, don't you? Dressed up like the Mikado is what Dick Lucas said about this. It's a dead work. It doesn't achieve anything.

Apart from give some work for people who make vestments. Outward rituals. I remember one of the brothers at Sussex Gospel Partnership saying, I've discovered that Anglicanism really is a mystery religion because I read, he was an Anglican minister, I read in the instructions for last Sunday that I'm to fold the communion cloth this way and that way and this way and that way.

And it's just an outward ritual. It's a dead work. And along with this is all the human priests and their sacrifices that they make, whether they're killing cockerels or goats or bulls or they think they're sacrificing Christ by holding bread up in the air at the communion service.

[60:17] It's all dead. It gets you nowhere. It's dead works. And although that had a place in the foundation of things back in the Old Testament, it's really dead.

There's no life in that. But by contrast, what we have is we turn from that to faith in God. And it is by faith that we have approached to God.

And we're to turn from such religion. I don't know whether you know people who are involved with that. Or maybe you're involved with it yourself or have been. But what we're to do is to turn from that, not to go back to it.

Don't go back to saying prayer is like putting a pebble in a goldfish bowl or prayer is like lighting a candle. Let's light a few candles. We turn from dead works to the real thing, which is by faith.

All that religious stuff. We move from that to the perfect, the real stuff. OK.

[61:29] What was the next thing? The next thing was the teachings on baptism. Well, I want to suggest again that what he's really talking about is the Aaron style stuff.

Where the cleanings and washings, that's what he means by baptism. It's all the stuff that the priests, the Aaron style priests used to do.

If you look back, you'll find there's immense rituals that are to do with washing and cleaning and sprinkling. So the priests need to be washed and cleaned and sprinkled.

And then they can wash and clean and sprinkle stuff. And it becomes clean in a ceremonial sense. It's a category that used to exist in the Old Testament.

And it became unclean. And then you could clean it by splashing water around or various things. Baptism.

[62:25] So let's assume we're talking about water. And he says, OK, that was part of the foundation. That was there in the Old Testament. But let's move from that to the real cleansing.

In the Melchizedek style priesthood, the real cleansing is to do with the real high priest. That's Jesus. And the cleansing that he does, chapter 10, verse 14, is by his blood.

Since that time, verse 13, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. Because by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

It's a reference to the perfect cleansing that the blood brings. Brothers and sisters, isn't it marvellous that his blood can make the foulest clean?

His blood avails for me. And brothers and sisters, whatever mess you have in your past life, whatever stain, whatever impurity, here is washing that washes the sinner clean.

[63:36] And gives the sinner a complete new start. Washed clean, you know, you would say, excuse me, but hallelujah. Isn't that amazing? This really purifies and really cleanses.

So that you can stand before God amazingly clean, without shame, without guilt, forgiven, because of this perfect salvation.

Every spot and stain on conscience and soul is wiped clean. Wow. Let's come to this next, this one, the laying on of hands.

Well, I'm going to say the same thing. This is my proposal. This laying on of hands thing is entirely to do with moving from the Aaron-style priesthood to the Melchizedek-style priesthood, the Jesus-style priesthood.

How were Aaronic-style priesthoods, sorry, how were Aaronic-style priests appointed? Well, they had hands laid on them. There was a human ceremony, and you can read about it.

[64:48] Perhaps it'll be interesting to go through it and see what it says. There's a human ceremony. Hands are laid on, and then hands are laid on, animals, and so on and so on.

This is how you appointed priests. They had a particular ancestry, so you'd check their birth certificate. Okay. Yep. And then they'd have hands laid on them, and that was how they were appointed.

That's in the old foundation. Let's leave that in place, but let's build on from it, because there were some nice hands being laid on the priest. But let's move on from there, and in the Melchizedek-style priesthood, it's different.

In the Jesus-style priesthood, it's different. Chapter 5, verse 5. Jesus is... 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.

The recruitment process for Jesus as our Saviour, that God had one single candidate in mind.

[66:06] Only he was good enough. He's the only one good enough to do this task, and God calls him to do it.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. He's called by God himself. So God says, this is the one to do this.

He can do it. Nobody else can. He can do it. And his qualification is not his lineage.

Chapter 7, verse 16. We have another priest like Melchizedek, one who has become a priest, not on the basis of a regulation about his ancestry, but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

That would do with unpacking, wouldn't it? But look what it says. His appointment is by the power of an indestructible life. Somebody whose life cannot be destroyed, if we're linked to him and he's linked to us, nothing can shake us.

[67:22] No one can pluck us out of his hands. Our life is hid with Christ in God. He is the one who is priest by the power of an indestructible life.

It's brilliant, isn't it? Think of the brilliance of his appointment as a high priest. He's surely the one. If he can't do it, no one can.

And he can do it. This is his perfection. Doesn't it make you want to say, I don't remember a story about a very dour Scottish preacher who finished going through a very doctrinal and precise description of the work of Jesus.

And you might think in his dourness that he would finish in a dour way. But he ended up saying, doesn't it make you want to say three cheers from Jesus?

Yeah. OK. Well, I've pretty much finished. In chapter six, it says, let us leave in place these elementary principles, but let us go on to maturity.

[68:36] Or as I'm trying to say, let's go on for this perfection. Let's not settle for anything less than perfection in the sense I've tried to describe it.

That's where we're heading for. That's what we want to lay hold of. He's a perfect saviour. He's a brilliant saviour. We don't want to take our eyes off him. He gives us a perfect salvation in this sense of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed.

His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me. It did. Amen. So I'll just pick up that list that we had before. This does not leave us unsure and doubtful, but it gives it, the perfection of it means that we have a position in Christ, which is, which is sure and assured.

The worshipper's conscience is perfected. This leaves us in a religion, let's use that word, which is not one which just hopes vaguely that God might be somewhere in the vicinity, whoever he or she may be, almost they say, don't they?

We're not out of touch with God. We're genuinely in touch with the real and living God. God hears our prayers. He lives within us.

[69:57] His life is at work in our lives. And it doesn't leave us with a religion which is powerless and weak, just a husk, just an empty outward form that gets us nowhere.

But this salvation is able to cleanse and transform to give us a fresh start. And it's not a religion which is hopeless.

And, you know, the graveside is a place, isn't it? And you're really tested there. Does what I believe have any relevance at the graveside?

Does it say, I have a hope which goes beyond this life, an anchor which is right up into the world to come, and I'm hanging on to that?

But this perfect saviour and perfect salvation does not leave us hopeless. It gives us strong confidence for the future, the distant future.

[70:58] And even in a universe where things seem to be rootless, here is a rock. Here is something to stand on, to give firmness to our lives that so many other people wish they had, really.

And here it is, offered to us in Jesus Christ. So, as I close, I say, please, let's grasp this. If we've really grasped this, if we've really had this within us, or better still, if we've been grasped by it, I think we would have very good reason to say, excuse me, but hallelujah.

Well, we've heard God's word, and let's reflect on the amazing success of the great high priest, Jesus, in achieving such a perfect salvation.

It's like scoring a bullseye, it's like hitting the ball into the back of the net. It's just a resounding success, this perfect salvation that Jesus Christ has achieved.

And let's not lose the gratitude for that. So, before we finally close, I'll just say that at the time of the recording, we've got a funeral and Thanksgiving service for a believing person that we all know and love coming up.

[72:24] And I simply say that although we grieve, let's not be overwhelmed with grief, but rather not grieve as those who have no hope, but rather have thanksgiving that Jesus Christ has scored yet another resounding victory.

He's plucked someone, one member, one member of a family, out of lostness and deadness, out of empty religion, and brought them to life in Jesus Christ.

And that person he has kept through the trials and temptations of life and used them in their character and their makeup in their own unique way.

And having used them in that way for his glory, he's brought them safe to the end to run the race.

And this person would, I'm sure, have prayed that prayer, establish the work of my hands.

And we believe God has answered that and will answer it in the future. So that's Amazing Grace.

And I'd like us to sing as our final song about grace, because salvation is by God's grace.

[73:40] Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. Well, we all have different backstories, don't we? But whatever our backstory is, it is grace that saved us.

We were all wretched in sin. He saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see.

It was grace that taught my heart to fear, to have a fear of God, to have a fear of what will happen to me in the end. Grace taught me that.

And then grace relieved those fears and said, here's the solution. It's Jesus Christ. And the song says, through many trials and toils and snares, I have already come.

It's grace that's brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. So let's sing 772 Amazing Grace.

[74:43] Amazing Grace. How sweet the sound Amazing Grace.

How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me God's grace that saved me.

I once was lost, But now am found, Was blind, But now I see.

God's grace that saved me. God's grace first taught my heart To fear, And His grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come His grace has brought me safe This love and grace will lead me home

[77:14] The Lord has promised God to me His word my hope secures High shield and great reward Is He as long as life endures And when this mortal life Is past and earthly days shall cease

I shall possess with Christ And lost eternal joy and peace The earth will soon dissolve like snow
The sun will no longer shine But God who's only here below
Will be forever mine Well, as we come to the end, I will close with a prayer.
It's the prayer in Hebrews 13 verse 20 May the God of peace Who through the blood of the eternal
covenant Brought back from the dead Our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep May He
equip you with everything good For doing His will And may He work in us What is pleasing to Him
Through Jesus Christ To whom be glory For ever and ever Amen Amen And till we meet again
Whether it's by Zoom or in the flesh God be with us all God be with us all And it's bye-bye from me
now Bye-bye Bye-bye