

“A Better Ministry”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 8:1-7

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Jeff: Don, do you want to hum for us?

Participant: Yep. *(Laughter)*

Don: No.

Jeff: No? *(Laughter)* Give that man a microphone. All right, why don't we pray then?

Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for many things in life. We're thankful most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ. We're thankful that He gives eternal life. We're thankful that You loved us, Father, when we were unlovable sinners. We're thankful for the Holy Spirit who has opened our eyes to our dead state, that we might have life in Jesus' name. And Father, we are thankful that because of that life we have hope that is beyond this world. And Father, that is sometimes difficult to maintain that gaze heavenward, and yet it must be maintained.

And so even in a time like this, where we think about the tragedy that happened in our city, when we think about those who have lost life, when we think about those who have taken life, we pray that You'll help us to set our gaze heavenward, and that our hope will be in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, we pray for our country. We recognize that we are in the state that we are in because of our idolatry, because of our immorality, because of our having forsaken You long ago. In a country that started with the idea that church and state must be separated we have come to believe that government must be against God. And Father, we repent of that as a group of men today. And yet our country needs to forsake that view. Our country needs to repent and come to You. And we pray that they would. And we pray that we would be Your people. We pray, Father, that we would be on Your side. And we pray that Your hand would be upon us for good, not that we might be the most powerful nation in the world but that we might be the most godly nation in the world.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: And so, Father, we ask for Your help in that, because only You can give it. Turn our hearts toward You.

But we do think of our brothers this morning. We think of Jerry and we're thankful for his presence, and for the completion of his surgery. And we think of Kevin and we look forward with him to his, and pray that Your hand will be upon him as it was upon Jerry.

But Father, we also think of Clara. And we ask that Your hand would be upon this little one. Father, sometimes this human body of ours, which is so wonderfully knit together, has a way in this sinful world of acting out of accord with the way it was meant to function. And so as her skull begins to knit together in a premature way, we pray that You would arrest that by Your own means and power if it be Your will. And we pray that You would bring the necessary corrective. And if not, we pray that You would allow the surgeons to intervene, and that their intervention would take effect, and that this little girl would enjoy a healthy life, would enjoy a healthy stage of growing and leading to

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adulthood. And we pray that Your hand would be upon Peter and upon his family. We pray that You would surround them with Your love, Your mercy, Your tender care. And remind them always of the love that You have for them in Christ Jesus.

So Father, as we give our attention now to Your word, we pray that Your hand would be upon us for good, that You would bring us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, though we be whatever age we are, for we long to grow in Christ. And we ask it in His name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well, why don't we get started by thinking of our passage? And our passage is Hebrews chapter 8. And Don, since you slacked off this morning with regard to the piano, do you have it turned to the correct passage?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Do you want to read 1-7 of chapter 8 for us?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: All right. Thank you.

Don: *“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a High Priest, One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a Minister of the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every High Priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Thus it was necessary for this Priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a Priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They were a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.”*

This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Well, this morning we're going to take a look at basically three points. We're going to think about some introductory matters. Then we're going to move to think about *the posture of Jesus Christ*. And then we're going to think about what that posture brings by way of benefit to us, and that is *full access to God*. And so just those things this morning. And so why don't we get started?

I want to tell you that I think that Bill Waterson, who wrote *Calvin and Hobbes*, I wonder if he made a case study of my life before he started writing the comic series. I doubt he did, but he comes awfully close.

Calvin is sitting in class. And he looks at the clock and he says, “It's almost 11:00. Wow, the last two hours really flew by.” He says, “I hope the teacher didn't say anything important.” *(Laughter)*

And then Calvin is in class. In the second one he's sighing, he's nodding off. And then the teacher says to him, “Pay attention!”

And he said, “There's no headrest on this chair; I should sue for whiplash.” *(Laughter)*

Well, that reminds me of someone. It reminds me of me. I happened to be in class one day. I thought I had mastered this technique of focusing upon the page of the book when

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it was open in front of me. And I thought to myself that if I just focus on the page in front of me, that the teacher would be none the wiser about me and where my mind actually happens to be.

But this one day he was a little exercised at all of us. And he was carrying around a big, heavy ruler. And he was walking around the room. And he decided to stop near my desk, which I didn't know at the time because I wasn't in class, at least mentally. And he started asking me the answer to the question. Well, I didn't even hear him ask the question until he took this big, heavy rod and started beating it on my desk, like Moses beating the rock. And then he realized that I had noticed that I did not turn the page a couple of pages ago. I had drifted. I had been in the midst of a drift.

And when I think about myself I think about the Hebrews. The Hebrews were drifting. They were not fixing their eyes upon that mark on the shore so that they could bring the boat in. Remember, that's a nautical term. So they could fix their place and not drift. They weren't doing that. And because they weren't doing that they were not what they ought to be in terms of the argument.

You remember when the writer to the Hebrews begins this letter, one of the things that he does is that he starts off with Jesus. And he starts off with Jesus and he says that Jesus is better than, greater than the angels. Why does he do that? Well, he does that not because he's interested in putting the angels down, but he does that because he wants to show them a larger argument. If you can't hear me you'll just have to raise your hand and let me know, and then I'll try to remain still. But he wants to show them that Jesus is not just better than the angels. But Jesus is in fact better than the Old Covenant, because he's not going to stop with the angels. He's going to go on and talk about Moses and about how Jesus is greater than Moses. He's going to talk about all that entails.

But one of the things that he's going to do is that in the midst of this, after he starts developing the argument, he's actually going to stop in the middle of chapter 5 and he's going to say to them, “Wait a minute! You're not even paying attention, are you? You're not even listening to me. You're drifting.”

Now I know that this is a letter that he's written to them. And so he's not there watching them. But somebody told him. But it's as if he's there, and he says, “Let me just ask you a question. Can you explain some of the basics to me? Can you talk to me about a knowledge of baptism, about repentance leading to life? Can you talk to me about these things in any intelligible way?” He says, “I don't think you can.”

And so he says, “Before I can go on and talk about the priesthood of Christ with you, which is a heavy subject, it should be a subject that's really familiar to you.” He says, “I've got to go back and really visit the basics.” So in the middle of chapter 5 to basically the middle of chapter 6 he gives them a chewing. He says, “You're dull and sluggish of hearing.” He starts that way and then he ends that way. And he really takes them to task for their mental posture.

You know, we need to stop at that point and give ourselves a chewing, because we don't know as much as we ought to know. Now the Christian faith is not built on how much knowledge we have. But certainly, once we come into our union with Jesus Christ

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by faith, we ought to be growing in our knowledge. We ought to be developing in our understanding of the Christian faith. And that’s what he’s saying to them.

Now in God’s grace what he does do is that he comes back to the priesthood of Christ. And so in chapter 7 he begins again to develop the theme. He said, “You ought to know something about this” before he gives them that chewing and he returns to it. And we looked at some of that. Remember, in the last couple of weeks after looking at some of that, I said to you that it feels like we’re in the deep weeds, doesn’t it? And it feels like we’re in the deep weeds because it is a heady subject. It’s a difficult matter.

But notice what he does in verse 1 of chapter 8. He says, “Now the point is.” I love the way that this is structured. It’s almost as if he says, “Now listen. In case you’ve been drifting, let me tell you what the main point is.” I love that. You know, there’s no lack of a sense of humor in this pastor. But if you were to talk to him, he’d probably say, “I’m not laughing.” (*Laughter*)

He says, “My point is this. In case you’ve missed it, in case you’ve been drifting, my point, the point that I’ve been making for the last 28 verses of chapter 7 is this. Jesus is the indestructible Priest by virtue of His resurrection to life. He is the Priest that we need.”

And he would go on to say this. He’s not only the Priest we need. He is the Priest that we have. He’s arrived. He’s come on to the scene. He’s emerged from the shadows and types of the Old Testament, and he’s here. Now that’s what he would say.

Now the thing that we need to understand is that this Priest who is here by virtue of his indestructible life is a better Priest than the Old Testament priests, the Levitical priests. And he carries on a better ministry than they did.

Now I’m going to talk to you a little bit more about it. But I want to just give you a heads up to clue you in to what he’s going to say, and it’s this. He’s going to say, “I want you to take a look at the Levitical priesthood. And I want you to observe what they’re doing.” They’re continuing to serve in their Levitical duties. They continue to offer sacrifices. They continue to be at work in the temple and to be busy with the ceremonies that are involved there.

But not so Jesus. Why? Because He has offered the one-time sacrifice of Himself. And He has sat down at the right hand of the Father. His work in terms of offering sacrifices is completed. Why? Because He is the pinnacle of all that the Levitical priesthood and its system pointed toward. In other words, if you were an Old testament saint and you led your lamb to slaughter on the altar and you watched it burn, you were supposed to say to yourself, “What that lamb is receiving as my substitute was meant for me. But that lamb is not my ultimate Substitute, because I’m going to have to bring another lamb next week. I’m going to have to bring another lamb next year.” What you were supposed to understand is that there was coming One who was prefigured and pictured in that lamb who would be a once-for-all-time sacrifice so that no other lamb would be needed or would need to be offered. That’s what you were supposed to understand.

But these Levitical priests don’t understand it. And so they’re busy in the temple, and they’re busy sacrificing. And Jesus is not. He’s seated. He’s got a better ministry.

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Now there's a pastoral point to this. I've been saying to you that there was a temptation for these people to return back to Judaism. And there was a temptation because of persecution. But the temptation for them to return was not simply located in the fact that they were persecuted. They were tempted to return because the tangible is always more mesmerizing than the intangible.

You know, when you walk into a big beautiful cathedral, what do you feel like? You feel like the transcendent has been made immanent. But when you oppose that and you talk about going into a living room as these people were doing, and you sat down with a crowd of people who were not dressed in vestments, and there was no incense, and there was no lamb being led into the middle of the living room and slaughtered on the coffee table in front of you, well then all of a sudden you were thrust into the intangible. And they were tempted to go back to the tangible. And so that was a temptation; let's not deny it. It was a temptation for them to do this.

And so there's a pastoral point to this. The pastoral point to this is that when you get up in the morning and you see your chair and you see your coffee, and your Bible is sitting on the table, and you don't really feel like being there, the question is do you have eyes of faith to see beyond the tangible to the intangible?

And that's really the pastoral point that he's driving at here in this particular text. But in order to understand that point we've got to understand *the posture of Christ*. But let me ask you a question. Yes?

Participant: Jeff,--

Jeff: You read my mind, Brian. Go ahead.

Brian: We're drifting into the same thing today, because instead of relying on God's grace through the work of Christ we rely on good works. We still want to see if we're good enough. So we're bringing our own lamb of works.

Jeff: Yes, that's exactly right. I mean, let's face it. Our neighbors in the Jewish synagogue. Let's just agree right up front with Sig that this was a horrible tragedy. And this should not be happening in our country or anywhere, not if we're loving our neighbor like Christ commands us.

But it was interesting to me when Sig told us about this group that came to cleanse the synagogue. And the reason why they came to cleanse the synagogue is because that's part of their work that contributes to their standing before God, right? You eat the clean. You live the clean. You clean the synagogue. And you are meriting something before God by your cleanliness, by your acts. And so in one sense it pulls at your heart to know that this tragedy has struck not only these people, but so near to home. But the tragedy is actually compounded when you think that in the midst of this tragedy they're still trying to earn their way before God. And so I totally agree with you. Anybody else?

Okay. So let's think about *the posture of Christ* for a minute. He is seated. Notice this. He is seated in heaven by the Majesty, and that obviously is God. Now Jesus is in the true tabernacle. And what we need to understand about this is this. This is not true versus false, true against false. We're not to understand this as anything other than the shadow versus the reality, the type versus the antitype. In other words, what the argument is really talking about here is going back to the shadows when the reality is right in front of you.

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Jesus is in the heavenly tabernacle. Why then are you going back to what you perceive as real and tangible, but really it's shadows, and you're going back to the Levitical system? Why are you doing that? So you need to understand that right up front when he talks about the true. He's really talking about shadow versus reality.

Now there are several things that I think that we need to understand about this. One of them is something that we've already been in contact with, and that is that Jesus is seated. We saw it in 1:3.

Transcriber's Note: Hebrews 1:2-3, ESV. *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature. And He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*

Jeff: Jesus is seated. But why is that significant? Well, I've already indicated why it's significant. And we see it again if we look forward in chapter 10 verse 11. It says, *“Every priest stands daily ministering and offering, time after time, the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.”*

That's really the difference. And what this writer is doing is setting up a contrast. He wants us to see a contrast between the Levitical shadows and types of the past and the fulfillment and the reality that is in Jesus Christ. Those Levitical priests continue to offer what they need not now offer when Jesus has come and sat down at the right hand of the Father, having made the one-time sacrifice for them. And he has not just offered that sacrifice for them. As he says in chapter 7, by virtue of His resurrection, He has shown that He has an indestructible life, and by that life is able to save those who come to Him in faith.

Now with Christ's appearing it goes without saying, after having said it so many times, that we do not need the types and the shadows of the past. And they didn't either. Fulfillment had come. And in fact in Hebrews 9:24 and 25 it says this. *“For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year by year with blood that is not His own.”*

Now what he's doing is, he's saying, look! By the Levitical priests continuing to offer sacrifices they are continuing to work for their own righteousness, because they have lost sight of the fact that those sacrifices were actually a pointer toward the Substitute who would take away sins once for all. For them the sacrificial system had become very much like the law. And what was the law to them? The law to them was a ladder by which they could climb through their own efforts and appease God.

The sacrificial system was the same. In fact, they had blurred this distinction so much between the law and the sacrifices that they appeared very lawlike altogether.

You know what I mean by that. When Moses received the law of God from God on Mount Sinai, what was it supposed to do? It was supposed to drive them to the sacrificial system. They were supposed to see the law, see its requirements, understand that it could not be fulfilled by them, and then go to the sacrificial system and say, “I've sinned

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according to Your law. Here’s the substitute. Here’s my substitute that will receive the punishment for having broken this law. Take it. And as I look at it, I will look forward to the Substitute to come, and that One is the Lord Jesus Christ.”

But they weren’t seeing it that way. They were seeing the law and the sacrifice as law. That’s what they were doing. Jesus offers Himself once. He’s the fulfilment of this.

Now I’ve got to tell you something. This is something that our friend Don raised last time prematurely. Thank you, Don. I was going to deal with it this time because this is where it enters into our discussion in such a way that we need to talk about it for a minute. And it has to do with the Roman Catholic Church and the Mass. And the reason why we need to think about it is because it’s a reality. We’re not throwing a dart at the Roman Catholic Church. We’re talking about theology. We’re talking about our systems of belief. And we’re Protestant and they’re Roman Catholic, and there’s an obvious difference as to why there’s a difference. And part of that difference has to do with what we believe about this very teaching that we’re talking about. And so there is a difference and I want to talk to you about that difference.

The Lord’s Supper is basically the Mass, or the ceremony of the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church. Now that supper is called a bloodless sacrifice in their documents, a bloodless sacrifice. Now though it’s called a bloodless sacrifice, we need to think about what that means.

The Council of Trent, which is the council that was the Counter-Reformational council of the medieval church, happened in 1545 after the Reformation. The Reformation really starts in 1517 when Luther proposes some propositions for debate on the Wittenberg door. After the Reformation is under way, the Roman Catholic Church decides, “We need to respond to this.” And so they respond with the Council of Trent.

The Council of Trent’s canons are considered infallible. And they are not considered infallible just because they come from a council. But they have to be approved by the popes. Three successive popes approved them as infallible canons. And so this is teaching that is binding upon all believers because it cannot be wrong according to the church. It’s infallible. It’s as if it came directly from God Himself.

Now what you have to understand is that what I’m going to tell you is not something that’s their opinion. It’s not something that’s my opinion. It’s something that they teach as infallible. So again it’s not dart throwing. This is something we need to understand. There’s a difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and it’s a pretty significant difference at this point.

In the first chapter on the sacrifice of the Mass, in the canons of Dort—oh, the canons of Dort! I mean the canons of Trent. Dort’s a good one. Sorry! (*Laughter*) Trent affirms that although Christ died once on the cross, He left His church an unbloody sacrifice that commemorates and perpetuates the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Now that leads to this. Trent also affirms that the only thing that distinguishes Christ’s sacrifice on the cross from the priestly sacrifice is the manner of the offering itself. The only thing that distinguishes Christ’s sacrifice and the priest’s sacrifice of Christ in the Mass is the manner of the offering itself.

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Now I want you to think about this. This is their quote. *“For it is one and the same Victim. It is the same now offering Himself by the ministry of the priest who offered Himself then on the cross, only the mode of offering being different.”* Those are their words exactly. It is the same. The only difference is the mode.

Now you have to understand. What do I mean by this? Well, let me give you an illustration. If I take my keys out of my pocket and I say, “Sig,”—Sig, I’m not throwing them to you; no way! (*Laughter*) If I throw them to Sig and I say, “Sig, give those to Jerry”, that’s one mode of getting my keys to Jerry. But if I go, “Hey, Jerry, here are my keys”, that’s another way. That’s another mode of giving my keys to Jerry. They’re the same keys. It’s just the manner or the mode of my getting them to Jerry that’s different. That’s all.

So whether it be Christ offering Himself on the cross or the priest offering Christ on the altar, it’s simply the mode of the offering that’s different. It’s the exact same offering.

Now the question that we need to ask is this. What of the effect, though? Is the effect different? Okay, the sacrifice is the same except for the mode. But is the effect of that sacrifice different? And this is what Trent says. Trent says that *“the Mass has a propitiatory value for the living and the dead.”*

What does *propitiatory* mean? Propitiation means to take away wrath. The reason why Christ went to the cross was to take away the wrath of God. In other words, He becomes the sacrifice in my place. The punishment due me was poured out on Him. And therefore I receive the cup of salvation and not the cup of wrath. Christ drank the cup of God’s wrath down to the dregs that I might drink the cup of salvation is another way of putting it.

But you see what the Roman Catholic Church is saying. The Roman Catholic Church is saying that the effect of me receiving the Mass is the same as if it were offered by Christ on the cross. It has a propitiatory value to it. The Mass takes away the wrath of God. It’s not just a commemoration. It’s a propitiation. And so the conclusion is—and I want you to know something,—the conclusion is that if you look at Trent, Christ is offered continually.

Now I want you to know something. In all fairness, the Roman Catholic Church knows the problem with this, and so tries to distance itself from it. But this is the problem. When you have an infallible teaching other than the Bible, you cannot say “That’s wrong.” Then you’re stuck. Trent really causes them to be stuck. Whether they realize that Trent is a problem or not, (and some of them do), they can’t get around Trent. And that’s the problem.

And look. That’s why as Protestants we’re just going to stick with the Bible.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It’s not that we don’t recognize value in theologians of the past. It’s not that we don’t recognize value in church traditions. It’s not that at all. We do. But when we elevate those theologians and those traditions to the level of Scripture and we say that there are basically two streams of revelation from God—one in the Bible and one in tradition,—then we have a major problem. Tradition and theologians must always submit to the infallibility and the inerrancy of Scripture. It’s just that simple.

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Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It’s that simple. That’s why we’re Protestants.

Participant: Jeff?

Jeff: No, no, no! (*Laughter*) Go ahead.

Participant: I just wanted to make sure I understood you because I’m a little slow. And you were referring a little earlier to Hebrews 9, I think, where it said that if it were this way, or something similar to the Roman Catholics, then Christ would have to be offered again and again.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So is that what you’re saying, that the Roman Catholics are really crucifying Christ again and again?

Jeff: Yes, that would be right. I mean, according to all the pieces that you put together, that would be right.

Participant: So is that why He’s still on the cross in their churches? When you see a cross, there’s Jesus hanging on the cross.

Jeff: No, I don’t think that’s the reason behind it.

Participant: Okay.

Jeff: Because some Roman Catholics—

Participant: Well, that’s different.

That is different, yes. I will say this, though. My uncle was a Roman Catholic priest. And it was so funny because when I graduated from high school he bought me a cross—not a crucifix but a cross with Jesus on it with outstretched hands. And I said, “This doesn’t look like a Roman Catholic crucifix.”

And he said, “You’re not a Roman Catholic.” (*Laughter*) I didn’t know, I wasn’t converted at the time. Anyway I thought it was funny. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Are you also saying that the priest is equal to Christ, if they offer the sacrifice, the priests that are allowing that to happen?

Jeff: Well, the priests are acting on the authority of the magisterium. And the Pope is the vicar of Christ on the earth. And so that’s why, for instance, a council is not infallible unless it’s given its stamp or its *imprimatur* from the Pope.

Participant: Do they have the position that the Pope and the priests are sinless like Christ?

Jeff: No.

Participant: Okay.

Second Participant: Jeff, I think that in the new Catechism they try to ease this a bit by saying that Christ now offers Himself through the priest.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: The old language was that the priest did the offering. Now it’s Christ through the priest. But it’s the same teaching.

Jeff: Yes. And they’ve tried to do some things, like the altar is not against the east wall with the priest’s back to the people. But it’s pulled out and he’s now facing the people, and so forth. And all of that stuff, I think, is a recognition that Trent’s not quite right. But it’s an infallible teaching.

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Participant: It’s hard to repent when you’re infallible.

Jeff: It’s hard to repent when you’re infallible! (*Laughter and applause*) That’s right. That’s why I only take side margin notes in the Bible with pencil. (*Laughter*)

All right. Well, there are some other things that Christ does. Christ is also serving in the heavenly temple. And how is He doing that? Well, He leads worship. And we were told that in Hebrews 2:12.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 2:11-12, NKJV. *“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.’”*

Jeff: He stands among His brothers and leads us in the singing of praise. I think that’s just a wonderful image from early on. He also makes intercession for us.

There’s a little bit of a question. There’s a little bit of a theological question about what this intercession actually is. Is this intercession just Christ and His presence before the Father, so indicating that the work is accomplished? Some Puritans and older Reformed think that. Others believe that there’s an actual intercession taking place. In other words, as the Son sits at the Father’s right hand, He prays that the blessings and the benefits He has earned will be given to His people, poured out on His people. And so there’s an actual intercession of sorts in terms of that understanding. So one way or the other,--and you can do more research on that to find out what you think; moving on ,--and because of his session we have full access to God.

Now I just want to pause for a second and think back to something I said to you earlier. You know, I walked into a beautiful church one time. And I have to admit and confess to you that although I am much more in the Puritan strain of things, Reformed in my theology, and if you were to walk into the church I serve it would be a little more on the plain side, the cathedral just tugs at my heart strings. I love it.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff speaks with mock exaggeration.

Jeff: I love the echoing voice, you know, and the solemnity of it all! (*Laughter*) And yet I want you to understand something. Let’s set that aside for a minute. I want you to think about something else.

When we think about those of the past, and we think about their explanations of how things happened, their explanations may have been correct in terms of biology or chemistry, but they were very superficial observations. And we think, *How stupid they were!* They didn’t have the technology and the capabilities that we have, and we know so much more. We can get out the microscope and we look more intensively at something. Or we get out the telescope and we do the same. We get down to the actual inner workings of the thing, and we’re able to give an explanation. And we think that by that , in some way, that we are touching reality in a way that is far deeper than those in the past actually did. And that’s not true. It’s not true. We may be able to explain the inner workings of a thing better. But that doesn’t mean that we’re closer to reality.

And now I want to come back to the idea of the church for just a minute. You may walk into a beautiful cathedral. And your emotions may be engaged in a way that they’re

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not when you walk into somewhere that is a bit more plain. But just because your emotions are more engaged does not mean that you are closer to God.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Do you understand that? We have to understand that, because when we worship God we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. And that doesn't mean we worship Him with emotions and truth. What that means is we worship Him according to His ways, which is truth. We're led by the Spirit into the truth. That's the way we ought to be worshipping God, led by the Spirit into the truth.

So in the Old Testament worship they saw things. They touched the sacrifice. They smelled the blood. They heard the bleating of the lamb and the music as it was playing over top of it. Incidentally, they not only smelled the blood, but they smelled the incense that covered the blood. And they tasted the sacrifice. It was a sensory-oriented way of worship. And the people who were in this house church were ready to desert. Why? Because—go ahead.

Participant: This was still going on when Hebrews was written. The temple had not been destroyed yet, right?

Jeff: That's exactly right. So there's no fanfare. There's no incense, no vestments, no animals, no instruments, nothing. There's nothing. There's just a guy reading an epistle. That's it. There's a supper. And you take the bread from the supper and you have the Lord's Supper with wine. That was it, the tangible versus the intangible.

And what this author is saying is that the earthly is simply a copy and Christ is the reality. That's what he's been driving at. When he talked about Christ's priesthood in chapter 7 that was what he was driving at. He was driving us to realize that what is earthly is not necessarily the reality. It's a copy, actually.

And in fact, isn't it interesting? When we get to chapter 11—I'll just forecast this,-- when we get to chapter 11, and the very first thing when he talks about the description of faith, he talks about the earthly. But remember what he says. The earthly was made by the Reality which is unseen. So do you see what he's doing? This whole epistle is pervaded with this idea that the seen is not necessarily the reality. But what is unseen is the reality. And he keeps driving that home in so many different ways.

And so, like I said to you earlier, when you get up in the morning and you see the coffee cup, and you see the table and you see the Bible on the table and it's early, and you're about ready to read it, and you're about ready to forsake that tangible for the tangible of your bed sheets for the next half hour, (*laughter*), then you need the eyes of faith to understand that the reading of that Bible is going to get you a benefit if you're in Christ. It's going to get you a benefit that the bed sheets never will. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Amen.

Second Participant: In light of Sig's opening comments, I think that we maybe have a little bit of a difference in regard to the tangible versus the intangible. The intangible is revealed, at least in part, through the tangible. And that is even us.

Jeff: Sure.

Participant: You're talking about Christ's priesthood as our High Priest. It also came into my mind what is our role, then, as part of the royal priesthood of all believers? And I

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think really that the hope for the world is Christ. But it's revealed through us. And really, if there's going to be a people who make a difference in this country or the world, it is us. We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Jeff: Amen.

Participant: And it's not quite what the author had in mind. But with respect to our role, as part of the royal priesthood we have to ask ourselves if we are living that out so to make Christ real to those around us?

Jeff: You know, it really is interesting. I agree with you. And I think that God is gracious in the fact that even in the New Covenant He treats us as sensuous beings, right? He gives us bread to eat for Communion, right? And wine which we drink as grape juice. Sorry! *(Laughter)* I found that funny, too. *(Laughter)* So God is gracious to us in ministering to us in that way.

But you know, I've been working through Romans in my congregation. And one of the things that I recently said to them was , when I was preaching from 12:9-21, the idea that the love he describes there. He says that you need to love one another and love must be genuine. The idea of that love, the word *agape* that he uses, was a rare word for the time. And what is he trying to say? He's trying to say that the love that the Christians have for one another is not just for one another. That section of Scripture sort of goes back and forth between what it's like to be in the church and what it's like to be in the world. You can't sort of parse them out evenly. So the love that we're to show to the brothers and the love that we're to show to the world is a love of a whole different kind.

And I love the way that 1 John 3, where John says, “What sort of love is this with which God loved us!” And I think that all of the apostles and the writers at that time, their minds were really swirling with the idea that this is a love of a different sort.

And I told my congregation. I said that the difference in this love is the love and its object. You know, all of you men, when you saw your wives if you're married, what happened? You saw her from across the room and you had to have her, right? And then she told you no. *(Laughter)* But I digress. Maybe that's more autobiographical. *(Laughter)* And you eventually wore her down and she said yes. *(Laughter)* But God looks across the crowded room and sees people who aren't worthy of love. And that's the idea of the difference, right? That's a different sort of love that the Christian must have.

Now here's the implication of that. The implication of that is that when I love the way that God loved me in Christ, that means this. That means the first thing that I see in a brother or sister cannot be their faults. The first thing that I see in a brother or sister has to be Christ in them, right? And that's the way then that God loves.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: The surgeon who treated the gunman at Allegheny General, he was a Jewish doctor.

Jeff: Is that right?

Participant: And when they brought him in, he said that he looked at him, he knew what he did. And he said, “Here is a person who needs my help.”

Participant: Amen.

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Jeff: Anybody else? Yes?

Participant: I appreciate your encouragement, because what you’re saying here in regard to the sensory versus just making the decision about praying in your closet, where He sees in secret and rewards you, you’re saying that when we exercise our will, we have to be true and just get by ourselves and take ourselves to the Word. God sees that, and that’s really how we worship the Father in our life.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And I think that the exhortation to us as men is like you said. I come here because this is great stuff, good food as far as spiritual food. But this is available to us every day. But it takes work to be able to get in and just digest meat. But that consistent walk where there is no fanfare, no hero that you’re going to see, but you’re going to be taught by the Holy Spirit, and He will teach us.

Jeff: You know, you’re 100% right. I mean, the difference is that when you get home and you’re alone, or you think you’re alone, right? But you’re really not alone. but you come here and there’s an Acme whistle. And—*(Laughter)*

Participant: An Acme siren! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: An Acme siren. *(Laughter)* And really, there is a sense in which it’s easier to come here and be with others and study the Word than it is to get up at home and be alone. And yet we’re not alone. That’s the thing; you’re right. Yes?

Participant: Can you go back one slide? Thank you. *(Laughter)* No instruments. That was at the RP house. The evangelical one had flutes and lyres and such. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: The synagogue had no instruments until the last fifty years. *(Laughter)* Because there were no sacrifices. *(Laughter)* I’m telling you!

Participant: Psalm 150! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Anybody else? Any hecklers? *(Laughter)* No? Thank you.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You so much for this day and for our time and for these men. Thank You so much for the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, it’s our prayer that we will love our neighbor. It’s our prayer that we will love You, our God. And we know that we will because You first loved us. Help us to love the neighbor because that’s oftentimes more difficult. And our city needs us in a way that they’ve not needed us before. And so we pray, Father, that You will help us to love with that different sort of love with which You loved us. We ask it in Jesus’ name. amen. *(Applause)*