

HEBREWS

6:12-7:24

Introduction

God's *promises* always exceed your *problems*. The **problem** with your **problems** is that you must patiently endure them as you walk by faith in God's promises. In fact, it is through your patient endurance that you obtain God's promises.

You obtain God's promises through your patient endurance; but where do you go to obtain your patient endurance? **You go to your great High Priest, Jesus Christ.**

These truths are presented to you in our text. The writer uses the example of Abraham. You're told in verse fifteen of chapter six that "after he patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Then you are introduced to a mysterious priest by the name of Melchizedek.

We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 You Obtain God's Promises Through Patient Endurance, and #2 You Obtain Patient Endurance Through God's Priest.

#1 You Obtain God's Promises Through Patient Endurance (6:12-20)

The Hebrew Christians had a problem: They were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. The writer was exhorting them to patiently endure their persecution and walk by faith in God's promises. The word "promise" or "promises" is used four times in these closing verses of chapter six.

Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We talked a great deal in our last study about what it means to be or become "sluggish." The writer is moving on from there to exhort his readers to patiently endure and thereby "inherit," or obtain, God's

“promises.” He thought an example would help – someone whose walk of faith they could “imitate.”

When it comes to walking by faith and obtaining God’s promises through patient endurance, Abraham is as good an example as you can find – especially if you are talking to people with a Jewish background.

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

Hebrews 6:14 saying, “*Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.*”

These verses are a quick summary of God’s dealings with Abraham. The emphasis is on God’s *promise* and His *pledge* to keep His promise. God made many promises to Abraham but one seems to be singled out: That God would give him a son through whom his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore and through whom the entire human race would be blessed.

Hebrews 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

He did have a son; but not until some twenty-five years after the initial promise was made to him! And he never saw the ultimate fulfillment. Abraham lived by these promises *even though they went unfulfilled in his own lifetime!* He was among those of whom we will read in chapter eleven, that they “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (11:13).

We conclude that you “obtain” God’s promises by being persuaded they are true, *regardless whether you see their complete fulfillment in your lifetime on earth.* You “obtain” God’s promises as you walk by faith and patiently endure your problems, knowing that God has pledged to fulfill them in His perfect timing.

These Hebrew Christians were considering a return to Jewish ritual religion in order to end their persecutions. The writer was telling them, “Be a **real** Jew, like Abraham, and *endure* rather than *end* your persecutions!” Or, if you prefer, we could put it this way: If Abraham were here, he would press forward and walk by faith in God’s promises and endure with patience.

Hebrews 6:16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute.

Hebrews 6:17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,

Hebrews 6:18 that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

God also made an “oath” to Abraham, which was a pledge that He would keep His promise. God doesn’t need to pledge to keep His promise! He is God and cannot lie. But He condescends to our tendency to disbelieve Him and so gives us a pledge as well as a promise.

Christians have the *promise* of eternal life and the *pledge* of the indwelling Holy Spirit that God will complete what He has begun.

The word for “refuge” refers to the Old Testament cities of refuge where you could flee for security. Believers have fled to Jesus; He is our eternal refuge. The “hope set before us” is that He is coming either to *Rapture* or *resurrect* us and we will forever be with Him. You will be raised in a glorified body; or you will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” at the coming of Jesus. You “obtain” these promises as you walk by faith and patiently endure your problems, knowing that God has pledged to fulfill them in His perfect timing.

I think we understand that we must patiently *endure*, rather than *end*, our problems. And I think we genuinely want to patiently endure. Where do we obtain this patient endurance? It comes from a **priest**.

Hebrews 6:20 where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

“Jesus” is your “forerunner” because He has “entered” heaven and is there ministering before God on your behalf. He has “become” your great “High Priest forever.”

Way back in chapter five the writer wanted to tell these Hebrew Christians about a priest named Melchizedek. He paused to give them a warning about the danger of dullness. When he began speaking about Abraham, he was returning to this priest to tell them (and us),

#2 You Obtain Patient Endurance Through God's Priest (7:1-28)

You and I have no problem with this; *but a Hebrew Christian would!*
How did Jesus become a *priest*, let alone a *High Priest*, let alone a
High Priest forever? It has to do with Melchizedek.

The writer presents two long arguments. One is *historical*; the other
is *doctrinal*.

He presents the historical argument in verses one through ten.

Hebrews 7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met
Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

Melchizedek appears in person only once on the pages of Scripture.
In Genesis chapter fourteen Abraham rescues his nephew, Lot, who
had been taken captive by five marauding kings. Returning from
battle, Abraham is met by Melchizedek. He was "king of Salem," an
ancient name for Jerusalem. He was "priest of the Most High God";
that's God, our Father in heaven, the God of Abraham. In their own
history there was, then, a king and priest of God who "blessed"
Abraham.

That is the *account*; here is the *argument*:

Hebrews 7:2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of
righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace,"

Hebrews 7:3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days
nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Hebrews 7:4 Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a
tenth of the spoils.

Hebrews 7:5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a
commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren,
though they have come from the loins of Abraham;

Hebrews 7:6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham
and blessed him who had the promises.

Hebrews 7:7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

Hebrews 7:8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed
that he lives.

Hebrews 7:9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

Hebrews 7:10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Abraham was “blessed” by Melchizedek and he “gave a tenth of the spoils” of the battle to him. This shows that Abraham recognized Melchizedek as God’s king and priest and that Abraham was subordinate to him. The Law established a priesthood through the descendants of Levi; but before Levi was a priest, Melchizedek was God’s priest. The fact that Levi was *after* Abraham, and descended from him, means that Melchizedek was actually superior to the descendants of Levi. The Hebrew Christians would have to agree that God had established a priesthood prior to the giving of the Law through Moses.

Who was Melchizedek? You’re told he was “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.” Some interpret this to mean that he was supernatural – that he was actually an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament. That is *not* what the writer is saying! He is saying that Melchizedek appears in Scripture with no genealogy. Genesis, which is filled with all those incredibly cumbersome genealogies – all the “begats” – is silent about Melchizedek’s lineage. And Scripture is silent regarding his death. He surely died; but we know nothing about the details.

This is important to a Hebrew! In their mind a priest must prove his descent from Levi or he cannot serve as a priest. And, under the Law of Moses, he could only serve from ages thirty through fifty and then he was done. Yet here was a priest of God prior to the Law of Moses who had no need to prove his genealogy and who served “continually” for his entire lifetime without restriction!

This historical argument sets-up the doctrinal argument in verses eleven through twenty-two:

Hebrews 7:11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

Hebrews 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

Hebrews 7:13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

Hebrews 7:14 For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

Hebrews 7:15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest

Hebrews 7:16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

Hebrews 7:17 For He testifies: “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*”

Hebrews 7:18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,

Hebrews 7:19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

Hebrews 7:20 And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath

Hebrews 7:21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: “*The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’*”),

Hebrews 7:22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

Melchizedek is spoken of one other time in the Old Testament, in Psalm 110:4. That verse was quoted back in 5:6 and it is quoted twice more in these verses. David uttered these words. They were a prophecy of a future king and priest. Now, under the Law of Moses no ordinary Jew could ever be both king and priest. Kings were descended from Judah; priests from Levi. If you were a thoughtful person reading through the Old Testament you would be puzzled by this prophecy of a king and priest “after the order of Melchizedek,” but you would have to acknowledge it. You would have to acknowledge that such a person would be superior in every way to the kings and priests in the Jewish system, under the Law of Moses, because such a king and priest was established by God prior to the Law.

The heart of the doctrinal argument is that God would not have spoken of another priesthood unless the priesthood under the Law of Moses was insufficient. If the priesthood under the Law of Moses was insufficient, and if there was and is another superior priest – **then it was foolishness to return to Judaism.**

The priesthood under the Law of Moses was insufficient. In these verses it is called “weak” and “unprofitable.” “Weak” means it could not ever eliminate the cause of your sin. “Unprofitable” means it could never change you. It could never bring you to “perfection,” or completion.

Jesus Christ is your “better hope.” At the Cross He conquered the cause of your sin and He is able to provide the power to change you. He alone can lead you forward to completion.

Jesus had the right to be king because He was descended physically from the royal line of Judah. He became a priest by His resurrection from the dead. He ascended into heaven, entered the heavenly sanctuary, and remains there before God in the “power of [His] endless life.”

As I mentioned earlier, this kind of stuff may not be all that meaningful to you. To a Hebrew it was and is crucial! The writer was setting aside fifteen hundred years of Jewish tradition; it required some biblical support. They could only obtain patience to endure their sufferings through a Priest; but it could **not** be a priest who was descended from Levi.

Let me point out one thing in passing: This entire argument rests upon a single appearance in Scripture and a single mention in Scripture. Melchizedek only appears in Genesis fourteen; he is only mentioned once more in Psalm 110:4. Either **all** Scripture is given by inspiration of God... *Or it is not!* You **cannot** begin to pick-and-choose the verses you believe are applicable for today.

It took the writer all this to arrive at the encouragement he wanted to give these suffering saints in verses twenty-three through twenty-eight. True believers, whether they have Jewish or Gentile backgrounds, walk by faith and obtain God’s promises through patient endurance. They obtain patient endurance from God’s High Priest – but *not* the one in the Temple at Jerusalem who is descended from Levi. It comes from God’s great High Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ, Who is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

What is so special about your great High Priest? The writer presents five things about Him.

Jesus is permanent:

Hebrews 7:23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.

Hebrews 7:24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

There were “many” Levitical priests. There were several functions and no priest could perform them all. They served on a rotating

basis; eventually they retired or died. In contrast, Jesus “continues forever.” His priesthood is “unchangeable,” meaning it will never be replaced.

Have you ever found a doctor or counselor that you could really relate to and who could really help you – only to have that person move away, retire, or die? Jesus is everything you need and He can never move away, retire, or die!

Jesus is perfecting you:

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Only Jesus is “able” to perfect you. “Able” stresses His innate power to achieve what He has willed to do. “Save” encompasses all the aspects of biblical salvation: election, justification, sanctification, and glorification. “Save to the uttermost” is sometimes interpreted by evangelists as “save from the guttermost.” While it is true that Jesus can save the most wretched sinner from the gutter, the phrase doesn’t look *back*; it looks *forward*. “Uttermost” is from two words meaning *all* and *complete*. You will arrive at your final destiny spiritually mature, whole, and complete.

You have only to “come unto God through” Jesus Christ and He will save you to the uttermost. He “always lives to make intercession for [you]” in heaven. His Father and yours cannot help but answer His prayers on your behalf.

Jesus is perfect:

Hebrews 7:26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

An imperfect priest could never bring you to perfection. Jesus can; He is “fitting for us” means that He is the only One fit by His own perfection.

His perfection is described in five ways. He is “holy.” This means inner purity of thought, emotion, and will.

He is “harmless.” He is free from malice towards you; His motives are absolutely pure. In health professions they have a saying, “Do no harm.” That’s the idea.

He is “undefiled.” He has not been corrupted by outside influences or pressures.

He is “separate from sinners.” Though He was among us as a man, and accused of being a glutton and a drunkard, the sins of others never stained Him.

He is “higher than the heavens.” His ministry is in heaven, *not* in a Temple on the earth. The earthly Temple had been destroyed in the past; it would be destroyed again in 70AD. Jesus’ ministry in heaven was and is over every circumstance on earth.

Jesus is your propitiation:

Hebrews 7:27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Propitiation is a Bible word that refers to the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to turn away His wrath that He might accept sinners. The Levitical priests offered sacrifices daily and annually, on the Day of Atonement. They first had to sacrifice for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. Jesus had no need to offer sacrifice for Himself; He offered Himself the final sacrifice!

Jesus has the pledge:

Hebrews 7:28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

Under the Law of Moses men were “appointed as high priests” even though they had “weaknesses.” The word “weaknesses” is a general term to describe moral, mental, and physical flaws and failings. They were imperfect; they served because the Law commanded them.

Jesus was made High Priest by God’s “oath,” or pledge. In Psalm 110:4 God pledged that Jesus was a “priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” The writer reminds the Hebrew Christians that this

pledge came “after the law.” In other words, there is something better than the priesthood under the Law or else God would not have given a further pledge. The something that is better is Someone – God’s Son, Jesus Christ, “who has been perfected forever.”

Conclusion

The problem with your problems is that you must patiently endure them as you walk by faith in God’s promises. You can only obtain patient endurance from Jesus.

Don’t go anywhere else, or to anyone else! Look to Jesus and the spiritual resources He has provided.