

Hebrews Chapter 7

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[0 : 0 0] now let's come before the Lord in prayer let's all pray together dear Lord we thank you that your word that we just read at the start of the service reminds us that you are our rock and Lord we sometimes don't fully appreciate what that means and yet as we sang that hymn we also heard that you're the author of creation you're the Lord of every man and Lord we acknowledge that this morning as we come into your presence that whether we've seen that or whether we haven't yet the Bible says it's still true because you created all things and so we come before you this morning and we come humbly knowing that we are sinful people we think of the things that we've done and said this week and sometimes we can come without thinking too much and yet Lord now as we come into your presence knowing that you are the Lord of all creation we come to just confess our sins and just to praise you and thank you that that verse goes on to say how much you loved us and you demonstrated that love when you went to the cross that we might have the hope of salvation and as we come into your presence this morning we pray that we would truly be able to contemplate you and think of your love and think of your loveliness think of all those many gifts that you've given to us the grace that you've shown to us and Lord we ask that once more we might find our hearts lifted up and to think of you as we search the scriptures which are full of prophecies of what would happen when you came and full of the stories of what happened when you were on this earth and hold the promise of what will happen if we go to heaven and Lord we pray that this morning your Holy Spirit will guide us in all these things and that Lord we will have a real sense of not only being in your presence but Lord that you will hear our cries to you whatever those might be because you know us not only as your people but you know each one of us individually and so we pray Lord that we'll have a real sense of that relationship with you this morning and that you'll bless us as we meet together that we might be encouraged and we ask all these things in Jesus precious name Amen well the reading this morning is taken from Hebrews chapter 7 in the new Bibles you got that version of it it's on page 1205 Hebrews chapter 7 and we're going to begin reading from verse 11 and going down to the end of the chapter so page 1205 Hebrews chapter 7 beginning at verse 11 now the background to this particular passage is that previously if you just look back you'll see that the writer has been talking about different groups of people he talks about Moses and the prophets then he talks about priests and in particular this priest Melchizedek we're going to read a little bit about now and also other things which suggest that he's talking to the people

about Jesus being like these people but so much greater both a prophet a priest and the king and here's what he says in linking this to this mystical priest that we read about called Melchizedek if perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood why was there still need for another priest to come one in the order of Melchizedek not in the order of Aaron for when the priesthood is changed the law must be changed also he of whom these things are said belong to a different tribe and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar for it's clear that our Lord descended from Judah and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests and what we've said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears one who's become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life for it is declared you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek the former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless for the Lord made nothing perfect and a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God and it was not without an oath others became priests without any oath but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you are a priest forever because of this oath

Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant now there have been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office but because Jesus lives forever he has a permanent priesthood therefore he's able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them such a high priest truly meets our need one who is holy blameless pure set apart from sinners exalted above the heavens unlike the other high priests he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people he sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself for the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness but the oath which came after the law appointed the son who has been made perfect forever amen very often very very very often and so you can have quite a period of quiet where you can as a teacher get your thoughts together but it's quite a danger too because when you ask that question and you sow the seed of doubt in people's minds then even if they were sure before they suddenly aren't quite as sure as they were

I can illustrate this very simply you must have been in a situation because I think everybody in the world has been in the situation that you've left the house and somebody says to you are you sure you've locked the door now when that question is asked what does somebody always have to do go back and check it even though you've done it you can remember doing it you remember turning the key in the lock you remember how the door sounded when you closed it you remember walking to the car out of the gate or whatever if somebody says are you sure you've got to go back and check it well what I want to talk about this morning from this passage is going to calm our fears about how sure we are about our salvation hopefully and unusually

I'm going to give you the title for my talk at the end because teachers we like that we do things upside down sometimes just because it gets a bit boring doing it the other way I'm going to read you first part of an article which comes from an American publication at least I will when I find it about guarantees here's what it says it's got a picture on here of somebody dressed up like a trapper in the American outback somewhere with a gun and it says even if you're up on your legal reading it's likely that you missed the case of Roy L Pearson versus Sue Chung that happened in Washington in 2007 in 2007 in Washington DC resident Roy Pearson hauled a local store called Custom Cleaners to court over a bungled trouser alteration that cost \$10.50 never in recorded history have a group of defendants engaged in such misleading and unfair business practices declared Pearson who sought \$54 million in damages the reason was on the sign outside the shop it said satisfaction guaranteed guaranteed so a \$10.50 repair that wasn't all that good he wanted \$54 million from the company needless to say he didn't win his case but apparently there are many companies that still give lifetime guarantees guarantees now I know if I bought a car

[10 : 25] I'd want one but unfortunately no car companies offer them and I wonder if you could get a lifetime guarantee on something that would be great wouldn't it be amazing but the difficulty we have living in this world is even if you get a lifetime guarantee that's not enough because every person in this world wants a guarantee that after this life something good happens or let's just not hedge our bets as people do because some people say well even if something good doesn't happen after death because they don't really believe that anything happens after you die at least nothing bad will happen unfortunately neither of those things are true the Bible describes exactly what will happen after death and we'll come to that in due course but the only statement that the world would accept is this one which is often said the only real guarantee is there are no guarantees in fact if we link that with another famous saying that you'll remember when I read it we'll see that it doesn't happen just with guarantees but it happens with promises with contracts or in biblical terms with covenants there was a famous

TV producer who said this I think it was a film producer anyway somebody will correct me afterwards he said verbal contracts and not worth the paper they're written on and so in this world we don't know any certainty any surety that whatever he said whatever he's promised will actually last for any length of time or whether it will in fact last a lifetime but in this passage we have some things that we can be sure of and I'm going to go through these things because in this passage we have a personal guarantee for one thing not from a company but from a person and this is described in some detail in some of the verses here and that contract we're going to go through and what it basically says we can have not just a lifetime guarantee but an eternal guarantee if we've trusted in Christ as our personal saviour because this contract this guarantee is one to one with the creator of all things that exist and my first question this morning for you to think about

I'm not going to give you the answer is how does that make you feel this morning supposing if I just step back and I go back to one of the things I mentioned because the bane of my life is if something goes wrong with the car if I could find a company that would give me a lifetime guarantee so that I didn't have to worry about anything about that car for the whole of my life how would that make me feel wouldn't you feel absolutely fantastic don't need to worry about that anymore I've got this car it's going to be just as good tomorrow the next day the next week the next month the next year as it is now it's going to be fantastic that is absolutely great and particularly if you were the first person that such a guarantee that was given to wouldn't you go round and tell all your family about this fantastic company that would give you a lifetime guarantee on your car and you go straight out and get one well that's what this guarantee is all about and if you have such a guarantee

I'll suggest some of the things that it might give us it gives us peace of mind that when problems occur we don't have to worry about it because someone else is going to deal with the problem it makes us grateful to that company if it is a company because they're going to look after us we're going to get really great customer service as it were it will give us hope it will give us a bit of an uplift that nothing's ever going to go wrong it will give us quite a lot of pleasure satisfaction maybe even joy that we can do that and also we'll feel in some way that that company who gives us that guarantee loves us a little bit we're not just customers we're not just numbers and inventory but they actually care about us and so imagine someone being offered this guarantee like we are sometimes with you know we just bought some electrical appliance and they said you want to take out insurance and the insurance can sometimes cost more than the appliance that you bought and we say no thank you but imagine this was a lifetime guarantee and it was free and somebody said no thanks I don't need it well that would seem a bit ridiculous but let's go to this passage and let's pick out a few things that come out of it

I want first of all to turn your attention to verse 28 because when it's talking about priests and about leaders and kings and prophets of course it's talking about how all these impinge in our life and look what it says for the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness but the oath which came after the law appointed the son who's been made perfect forever this guarantee this contract this covenant is perfect not because of the legal document because we've known in the past legal documents as that film producer said aren't worth the paper they're written on but this one relies not on man's perfection not on legal perfection but on the perfection of Christ let's just have a look at what that means we don't need to turn these

[17 : 34] I've got a few references you don't need to turn to them if you want to I'll tell you them but you don't have to I'll read them out the first one's in Deuteronomy chapter 32 verses 3 and 4 where it says this I will proclaim the name of the Lord oh praise the greatness of our God he is the rock his works are perfect and all his ways are just a faithful God who does no wrong upright and just is he you might find that you remember a few of the lines from that verse that we read from the psalm right at the beginning but it starts like this which sort of mirrors that verse I'm just reading a few verses of that psalm some of which we didn't read I love you Lord my strength the Lord is my rock my fortress and my deliverer my

God is my rock in whom I take refuge my shield and the horn of my salvation my stronghold and then he goes on as for God his way is perfect the Lord's word is flawless he shields all who take refuge in him for who is God beside the Lord and who is the rock except our God it is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure so this guarantee that he's offered to us this covenant this promise this contract as it were is perfect it's flawless it's got no shortcomings because it's in Christ it's Jesus who is the perfection in this situation and a little bit later in Hebrews in chapter 12 verses 1 and 2 it says this therefore since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us fixing our eyes on

Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith for the joy set before him he endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the throne of God Jesus is perfect and not only is he perfect it says he's the perfecter of our faith he's not the perfecter of us in this life we'll never be perfect but he is the perfecter of our faith now one of the things that we are very good at as human beings we're not so good at many things but one of the things we're very good at is that because we are God's creation because our bodies our eyes our legs our arms are all created by him these bodies are absolutely amazing not mine incidentally I'm referring generally but they're amazing because you can have a painting hung on a wall and you can be sitting down 100 yards away having a cup of coffee and someone looking at the painting will say it's not quite level and you have to go and adjust the painting because our eyes our brain whatever God has put there tells us when something is not quite right sometimes when we're not even sure what it is that's not quite right we're very very good at that we're good at spotting imperfections so much so that we're very good at telling other people what's wrong with them strangely we're not very good at finding them in ourselves perhaps sometimes we need to look in the mirror but what is the point of this well in life nothing's perfect just when things seem to be going well something goes wrong and our peace our contentment is spoiled and often even when we think of things we've done maybe that are worthwhile we realise all of us if I asked you this morning to stand up if you're perfect you wouldn't do it even if you thought you were because you know everybody else would think you're mad and the most arrogant person in the place because we all realise especially as you get older that we're not perfect that we constantly do things that are wrong but we're still searching for perfection one of the people or the group of people in this world who have this eye for things of course is artists and I saw an artist once being interviewed on television and the commentator maybe trying to be kind and trying to ingratiate himself to the artist said you know that painting of yours in that gallery is perfection and the artist said no it isn't it's got lots of things wrong with it he said but the next one will be and in life there's this misconception as we go through life we get better we don't we're just as sinful as we always were if we did get better as we went on as we got older we get wiser we get happier we get friendlier we be nicer but I'm just as irascible as I was when I was younger

I've got the same temper I had when I was younger so the first bit about this particular guarantee that's given in this particular chapter is that it's perfect it has no flaws and that's because it's centred in Christ the next thing we need to go to verse 16 for in verse 16 of this chapter we're told this having given this description of the priest it says someone will come like Melchizedek one who's become a priest not on the basis of regulations to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life this guarantee not only is it perfect it's indestructible so imagine you had some paperwork somewhere or even a plastic card which had something on about this guarantee you might lose it it might get burnt up in a fire somebody might steal it but this particular guarantee given in this chapter is indestructible nothing nothing can happen to it maybe you're one of these people who are a sucker for films about superheroes superman batman captain america whoever it might be fantastic four why is why is it that these films are so popular well surely it's because we sort of think to ourselves wouldn't it be great if we were super if we had super powers if we could do these things but if you've ever seen one of these films even the indestructible superman is not indestructible why not because if there's any kryptonite around he's as good as dead because all of these superheroes have got a fatal flaw there's something that the bad guy always finds out about that will destroy their powers or that will enable this person to overcome them and of course all of us however strong we might be in our own eyes or other peoples we've all got a flaw but you might remember one of the words that was used earlier about

Jesus and God's law it's flawless there is no weakness it is indestructible because there's nothing that can be done with the awesome power of God and we understand that we know that we haven't got these powers we know that we can't do these things but again let me ask you another question suppose you knew someone who did suppose these superheroes really existed and there was actually a superman wouldn't it be great if he was your friend and was next to you all the time wouldn't you feel completely safe wouldn't you feel secure well listen to these verses I'm going to read verse 1 from Romans chapter 6 it says now if we died with Christ we believe that we will also live with him for we know that since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again death no longer has mastery over him the death he died he died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives to God our saviour the

[27 : 45] Lord Jesus Christ what greater power is there than that that you can overcome death and rise from the dead here's another one from 2nd Timothy chapter 1 he has saved us this is if we've believed in him and called us to a holy life not because of anything we've done but because of his own purpose and grace this grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time but he's now been revealed through the appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus who's destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel and the last one in Revelation chapter 1 a great verse for Christians or for those who are worried about their status with the Lord do not be afraid I am the first and the last I am the living one

I was dead and now look I'm alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and Hades it's a fact isn't it we prayed about it in some ways in the prayer earlier this is a dangerous world that we live in there's lots of things that create problems for us and that's just thinking about you know wars economic situation whatever but it's that's not the real danger in this world the danger is that we don't understand that the devil is opposing us all the time and there's a war that Bible says is going on throughout our lives in this world with as it says the powers talking about you know heavenly things not things on this earth and they are dangerous because they can send us to an eternity which is as the

Bible describes it hell and so it's important that we realise these things and realise that in Christ we have someone who is indestructible has an indestructible life because he's overcome death we know that in times of war people say this a lot about the second world war I know probably about the first world war as well that when men and women who are on the battlefield were in imminent danger because of shelling perhaps or bombing or whatever it might be then what people often did even if they weren't believers they would pray to God it was a sort of response that they couldn't control who else could they cry out to in their need the answer was simple they cried out to

God they said a prayer for some when they saw the answer God gave them to that prayer that made them believers for others once the problem had passed they returned to the position they were first in and perhaps it's because when we think about this war that's going on not in this world but in heaven for our souls between the devil and between the Lord Jesus and God himself perhaps we think we can solve that problem ourselves and the fact is we can't do it in our own strength we need someone who's indestructible so here's another question for you knowing that if we understand the sort of logic of that how much more do we need to look to God and pray to him for our help and his help in this life we are at war and the bible promises that if we pray to the

Lord Jesus and to God he says he will give us Christian armour not time this morning to go into that but you all know the passage that I'm talking about so we need confirmation that this is true that this is the case here's just one and then we'll move on to the next point from Jeremiah chapter 33 verses 2 and 3 this is what the Lord says he who made the earth the Lord who formed it and established it the Lord is his name call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you don't know sometimes I'm working in schools with teachers and perhaps because of the way they've come through the system and some are not experienced in the subject that they're teaching we don't need to go into why ask the government they don't know what they don't know they need someone to tell them what really they should know but they don't and that verse tells us that if we call to God if there's something we don't understand about these heavenly things that are going on and the plan that

[33 : 39] God has for us if we cry out to him he says he will answer us and he will tell us great and unsearchable things that we don't know we really need to be a praying people if you're sitting there this morning and think that when you pray nothing happens then nothing can be further than the truth when Christians pray the earth moves not because we prayed but because God answers our prayer the next thing we find in verse 25 of chapter 7 in verse 25 this is what we read talking about Jesus therefore he's able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them now if you look in a

Bible exposition book or you look up in a dictionary the Greek and Latin words that are used here then you find out that in Latin this word that is translated as complete means perfection which we've already talked about but in Greek it means completeness you could argue that the two things are the same but however perfect something is you have to get to that point first and the thing has to be completed and of course we find out that things need to be finished and Christ is able to do that again listen to what the Bible tells us in John chapter 19 this is what it says and just listen for the words it gives us the clue to where it's going later knowing that everything had now been finished and so that scripture would be fulfilled

Jesus said I'm thirsty so this was Jesus on the cross a jar of wine vinegar was there so they soaked a sponge in it put the sponge on the stalk of the hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus lips when he received the drink Jesus said it's finished with that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit what was finished his life no because Jesus is alive and he's now with God and at God's right hand his work was finished and what was his work to pay the penalty for the sin of all those who would believe in him here's another verse from Hebrews chapter 10 this is a great verse day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins but when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of

God and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool for by one sacrifice he's made perfect forever those who are being made holy he sat down at the right hand of God now for those of you who go to Basenfeld you know that one of the great activities that we have is doing a jigsaw puzzle and you get several people sitting there putting in pieces at a time and over the few days that we're there we gradually get the thing finished but you know the most frustrating thing about doing a jigsaw puzzle is if you get to the end and there's a piece missing yeah there's a piece missing you've got the whole of this jigsaw and there's one piece in the middle which is missing when that happens we send search parties out to look in the bedrooms under the chairs look through the box again see if we've missed anything to try and find that piece and when that last piece goes in if it's found how wonderful it is to see the finished jigsaw and you know it's a bad analogy but

Jesus and his death and resurrection on the cross is that missing piece that makes this jigsaw puzzle of life actually make sense and makes it complete and makes everything make sense here's a question we in this world never finish everything because death will always catch us unawares so however we might want to finish things some things will never get finished that room that we were going to paint that we never got round to that hinge on the door that we never fixed whatever it will be some less important things some more important things here's a question if you could just choose one thing in this life if somebody told you that you know you're about to die and you had one thing to do in this life what would it be it might be a very difficult decision and there might be lots of things which might make you think yes I really should do that

[39 : 26] I should go and ask that person for forgiveness because I really hurt them years ago or I should go and make up with that person over there who I annoyed or whatever it might be so what would it be well surely if you've read this book that we're thinking about this morning you can only come to one conclusion because we have to get ourselves right with God we have to get ourselves right with God because if we don't then all the promises that scripture says about us being with him in heaven won't ever happen because the process won't be complete I think I've talked about this before not necessarily in sermon but when Eric Aldrich was here once he was here for about four weeks and every single Sunday morning he preached on you must be saved or you must be born again again and he said he preached on it again today because Eric had said I think I'm going to preach on it next week as well he said why do you keep preaching on you must be born again and Eric said because you must be born again and he was absolutely right we need this completeness that Christ offers so that we too might be able one day to sit down in heaven with him well these are wonderful things but now we come to the guarantee and that's in verse 22 talks about the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you're a priest forever talking about Jesus and then it says because of this oath

Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant Jesus himself is our guarantee if when we read the scripture and we see Jesus dying on the cross if we see him being raised from the dead if we see all the instruction he gave to his disciples if you see the promises that the Bible makes for those who trust in him we have not just a guarantee but a personal guarantee an eternal guarantee again just a few references 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 says this he set his seal of ownership on us and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 says something very similar and in fact I'm not going to read it but so does Ephesians 1 now the one who's fashioned us for this very purpose is God who's given us a spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come and then finally in Acts chapter 13 we tell you the good news what God promised our ancestors he's fulfilled for us their children by raising up Jesus as it is written in the 2nd Psalm you are my son today I have become your father

God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay as God has said I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David so it is also stated elsewhere you will not let your holy one see decay so Jesus himself is the guarantee because he didn't die or at least he rose from the dead and now lives in heaven what stronger guarantee could you have well I just want you to think for a moment imagine that you were just about to embark on a new job or a project of some kind and you're looking for a backup plan if things go wrong one of the things that you do if you get some sort of assurances or guarantee is you look at what goes into that contract you look at the small print as it were and find out what conditions are included so that that guarantee isn't null and void just imagine you had that lifetime guarantee for that car that I keep talking about and something went wrong and you go back to the garage with your lifetime guarantee and say can you repair the car please and they say

I'm sorry you didn't look at the terms and conditions and it explicitly says there if you don't bring the car in within X number of days of finding a fault then the guarantee is null and void but it's a lifetime guarantee yes it is but only if you follow the conditions well there's clearly a conclusion in in that because what are the conditions for this lifetime guarantee well for me it reminded me of what happened when God created the world in Genesis 2 it says this thus that heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array that idea of completion again by the seventh day God had finished the work he'd been doing so on the seventh day he rested from all his work but Jesus is already at the right hand of God he's already completed the work he's already finished his plan of salvation it's a perfect plan it's guaranteed because Jesus is indestructible he's defeated death and being at one with Christ is that last piece in the jigsaw that we talked about of salvation and so it's comforting but still what are the small print rules as it were well

I'm going to do one last illustration because you'll be amazed about this but I actually know something about the clothing trade because my mother worked in a clothing company and because she used to take me into work in the summer holidays I'm speaking from experience I know these things right in the clothing trade if you're making clothes these are four groups of people involved first you'll have the designer who makes creates the final plan for or design for the item then you have sample hands as they call them who carry out the plan and they tell other people how to do it and then you've got the chief sample hand because they cost the item and then they set the standard for all the other sample hands to follow and then finally you have these people called finishers who at the end make the complete thing up and make sure there aren't any faults in it no flaws and that the garment is complete and each one of these is a separate role in the manufacture of clothes and all of these people are important and if you haven't got any one of those then you don't get the completeness you don't get the perfection they can't give the guarantee are you following my train of thought you can't give a guarantee if you can't guarantee all the stages here are the small print bits that we've not focused on the great thing and the thing that I want to leave you with this morning to pull these things into one conclusion is this

[47 : 57] Jesus performs all of those roles but not in a clothing company because he was the designer of the creation and the plan of salvation he did it he was the one who ultimately carried out the plan himself and taught others the way to heaven he was the one who led a perfect life and demonstrates the standard for Christian living he was the one who finished the work of salvation by being obedient and willing to die on the cross so when we look at each of those aspects all of which you notice whether we're talking about perfection whether we're talking about a guarantee completeness or the finished thing they were all in Christ no one else I'm just going to close by giving you my title for the talk it comes up as I read this sentence out

I'm sure you'll spot it praise God that in Christ we have a perfect indestructible complete guarantee that we have a living hope in this world of one day being with him in heaven oh what a saviour praise his name amen I'm freed from the guilt and burden of my sins Jesus is mine who never shall forsake me in this book it gives a quote by John Wesley about Christian perfection what is Christian perfection he says loving God with all our heart mind soul and strength that is the only small print in the gospel serve the Lord our God and trust only in Christ now to him who's able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only good our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through

Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forever more amen amen amen Thank you.