

## A Total High Priest

Christ's priestly work completely answers our problem of sin. For this reason Paul would know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). It is not necessary to seek any other means of being reconciled to God than his only sacrifice. Knowledge of Christ crucified far surpasses everything else (Phil. 3:8). In Christ's wounds we find all manner of consolation for the present and for the future. Christ's death has perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Use this acronym to remember Christ's work as priest. As a propitiating priest, Christ has done away with God's wrath toward believing sinners. As a replacing priest, Christ has stood condemned in our place, sealing our pardon with his blood. As an innocent priest Christ has answered for us God's demand for perfection. As an exceptional priest, there is no other like him; there is no one else to whom we must look for healing. As a suffering Priest, Christ suffered the pain and anguish of hell so that we don't have to. As a total Priest, when Christ said, "It is finished," he meant it (John 19:30). He secured for us total salvation.

Christ's priesthood teaches us that we have no other way of dealing with our moral failure and the penalty thereby incurred than to come to God and say, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

<sup>i</sup> Accessed on March 28, 2012 from <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/103-never-give-in>

<sup>ii</sup> Charles Erdman, *Remember Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 9.

<sup>iii</sup> Strong's Concordance

<sup>iv</sup> Belgic Confession, Article 21

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You are Invited to...

# 7 Last Words of Christ on the Cross

at Hope Church  
(4951 Birney Ave., Moosic, PA.)  
April 6 from 12-1:30 pm.  
*Feel free to come and go as you are able.*

Presenters (in order of appearance):

Rev. Glen Rixinger (Hope Church), Rev. Allen Mickle (Tunkhannock Baptist Church), Rev. Bill Boekestein (Covenant Reformed Church), John Schwartz (Hope Church), Rev. Steve Wilson (Hope Church), Rev. Mike Conroy (Grace Fellowship Church), Rev. Doug Jensen (Moosic Christian Missionary & Alliance Church).

# PROCLAMATION

Promoting robust, religious thought in the tradition of orthodox, historic Christianity  
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## CHRIST OUR HIGH P-R-I-E-S-T REMEMBERING CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS

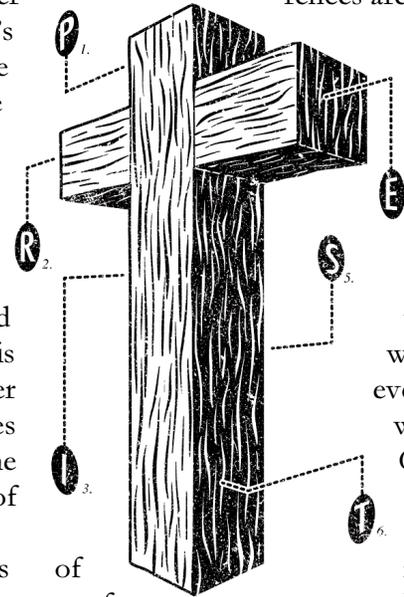
BY WILLIAM BOEKESTEIN

In 1941 Winston Churchill stood before an eager audience at an all-boys school in war-torn England and spoke these famous words, "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in."<sup>1</sup> Churchill's words echo the thrust of the message of the writer to the Hebrews. But where Churchill rested his comments on the "honor and good sense" of his audience, the writer to the Hebrews urges confidence in the high priestly work of Jesus Christ.

The recipients of *Hebrews* were in danger of abandoning Christ through unbelief. Pressured by persecution, assaulted by sin and challenged by everyday life, these believers were on the brink of quitting in the heat of battle. With

such dangers clearly in view the author chooses one primary theme on which to focus; the priesthood of Christ. The word "priest" occurs over seventy times in the New Testament. More than one third of these occurrences are in *Hebrews*.

Christ's priesthood demands believer's attention on a continual basis. When we fear that God is still angry toward us we need to remember that Christ has *propitiated* the wrath of God. When we doubt that God could ever look on us with favor we need to recall that Christ stood as our *replacement*. The love the Father shows to him he now shows to us. When we take for granted that Christ suffered for us we need to reflect on his *innocence*. He always does the will of God for us with precise obedience. The priesthood of Christ is eminently practical but if we can't re-



member what his priesthood means we will not use it as we must. It has been well said that “the association of ideas is the controlling law of memory.”<sup>iii</sup> If we could associate six key ideas of Christ’s priesthood with the letters P-R-I-E-S-T perhaps we would more readily recall his work and be better steered to “never give in.”

### **A Propitiating High Priest**

In very simple terms propitiation means to regain favor. The word, which is used in several key New Testament verses (Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17, 1 John 2:2; 4:10), reflects an Old Testament word describing the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, which was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice on the annual day of atonement. This rite signified that the life of the people, the loss of which they had merited by their sins, was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that God by this ceremony was appeased and their sins covered.”<sup>iiii</sup>

The Belgic Confession of Faith (Art. 21) says that “Christ presented himself...before the Father, to appease His wrath...” By experiencing the terrible punishment which our sins had merited Christ saves his people from the otherwise certain judgment of God’s wrath (1 Thess. 1:10, Rom. 5:8-9). The reason that Christ staggered in the Garden as he considered the cup which the Father had called him to drink was because he knew that the judgment for all the sins of all God’s children swirled in that cup. And he drank it all! Christ was forsaken of God (Matt. 27:46;

Psalms 22:1) that we might be accepted of God, and never more be forsaken.

The concept of propitiation is closely related to that of substitution.

### **A Replacing High Priest**

The Bible says that Christ “presented himself *in our behalf* before the Father, to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction, offering Himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins.”<sup>v</sup>

Isaiah 53 (Cf. 1 Peter 2:24) is a remarkable testimony to Christ’s work as substitute. *He* has borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows (v. 4). *He* was wounded for *our* transgressions, *he* was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement for *our* peace was upon *him* and by *his* stripes *we* are healed (v. 5). The Lord laid on *Him* the iniquity of *us* all (v. 6). For the transgressions of *God’s* people *he* was stricken (v. 8). *He* shall bear *their* iniquities (v. 11). *He* bore the sins of *many*, and made intercession for the *transgressors* (v. 12).

Reflecting on Christ’s death Philip Bliss wrote: “Bearing sin and scoffing rude, *in my place* condemned he stood, sealed *my* pardon with *his* blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

The impact of the principle of substitution, or replacing, is amplified when we consider Jesus’ innocence.

### **An Innocent High Priest**

The Gospels deliberately highlight Jesus’ innocence, particularly in the hours preceding his death. The Sanhedrin struggled to find enough false witnesses to agree on a charge (Matt. 26:60). When the crowd demanded

Jesus’ crucifixion Pilate asked, “Why, what evil has He done?” (Matt. 27:23). In the span of nine verses, John three times records Pilate saying, “I find no fault in him” (John 18:38-9:6). “While [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man...” (Matt. 27:19). The centurion who helped put Jesus to death confirmed the innocence of Christ when he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). The earth itself testified to Jesus’ innocence when it split open in revolt at his unjust death (Matt. 27:51).

The propitiatory and substitutionary nature of the atonement would mean nothing if Christ wasn’t perfectly innocent. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

David illustrates Christ’s innocent substitution when he said “Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it” (Psa. 69:4). The punishment Christ received felt heavier since there was no guilt in him.

### **An Exceptional High Priest**

One of the main arguments in the book of *Hebrews* is that Jesus is superior to the ordinary priests who served in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Cf. Heb. 5-7). The Bible says that there are two orders or kinds of priests. By far the most common were the Levitical or Aaronic. But there is another order of priest. Christ is a high priest after the order of Mel-

chizedek (Psa. 110:4; Cf. Gen. 14:18-24). Descended as he is from the tribe of Judah, from the kingly line of David, Christ is the exception to the priestly rule.

The Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to the priesthood of Levi (Heb. 7:10). Christ alone is our eternal, sinless, oath-bound priest who actually sat down at God’s right hand having “by Himself purged our sins” (Heb. 1:3). The futility of the labors of the Aaronic priesthood does not apply to Christ. Since it is impossible for God to lie, by his oath we are assured that the foundations of salvation are eternal and immovable.

### **A Suffering High Priest**

Christ’s whole life, in body and soul, was a life of suffering. As he approached the cross the weight of his suffering increased. In the Garden, “...being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44). The descriptions of Christ’s physical suffering on the cross are palpable. “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death” (Psa. 22:15).

Christ’s spiritual suffering is intangible and defies comprehension. On the cross he humbled himself unto the very deepest reproach and anguish of hell. Because of his suffering, no matter what befalls us we can never say, “Christ cannot understand” (Heb. 2:17-18). Christ became our sympathetic high priest through suffering (Heb. 5:8).