

Thy Very Heart: My Heart Healed by His

~Hebrews 7~

Week six of series, “His Steadfast Heart,” March 7, 2021,
Rev. Sam Ferguson

--The purpose of this series--

We are putting our tired, cold, and weary hearts before God’s great heart, asking God for healing and renewal.

Remember that our faith is far more than a set of ideas. It has an **affective center** where our hearts come in contact with God’s glorious heart.

Our approach for the rest of the series will be to put our hearts before the flowing stream of truth and love coming from God’s heart by turning to **Scripture**. Then we plead and **pray** that the **Spirit** would supernaturally make the truths we encounter take root inside of us.

--What we’ve studied over the last few weeks--

In **Matt. 11**, we saw that Jesus’ heart is gentle and lowly, and therefore we can run to him.

In **2 Cor. 11**, we saw that ultimate comfort is found in God’s presence, which we often experience through brothers and sisters in Christ.

In **Matt. 23**, we saw that God’s anger burns hot when that which he loves is threatened, but his anger burns slow and his love flows naturally.

In **Heb. 4-5**, we saw that Jesus shares with us in suffering and stands as a witness to perfect, inexhaustible mercy.

--Uncertainty is part of life--

Uncertainty is part of life, but it’s hard to live with.

Uncertainty around: You may experience uncertainty with your job, the economy, school. Or perhaps you’re uncertain about some of the people around you—can you trust them?

Uncertainty beneath: This is uncertainty in our world or culture. You may sense pervasive uncertainty around long held ideas of morality, truth, or God that have held a culture or a people together.

Uncertainty within: This can be the worst kind. This is when you don't trust or understand yourself. When you wonder if you are the type of person who can keep a commitment or be relied upon.

Because we are finite and fragile creatures, we desperately look for something sure and stable to depend upon. It's hard to cope when things are uncertain and "the foundations of the earth do shake" (Isa. 24:18, KJV).

To all who wrestle with the anxieties of uncertainty, we have a rock to lean on in God's steadfast heart, which caused the people of Israel to sing: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love *endures forever*" (2 Chr. 20:21).

--*Hesed*--

The phrase "steadfast love" in the Bible refers to a quality of God. The phrase comes from a single Hebrew word, *hesed*, which no single English word can capture. The term conveys a sense of kindness, mercy, forgiveness (see Exod. 34:6b-7). Often, however, the word conveys God's absolute commitment, loyalty, faithfulness, and unchangeableness.

To his people, God is committed, constant, unchanging, unswerving, unfailing, and faithful to the end. He is one whose heart is steadfast.

Once again we look to Hebrews, where Jesus' role as High Priest displays God's steadfast and committed heart toward his people.

--Opening thoughts on Heb. 7 and Melchizedek--

As High Priest, Jesus stands between God and man, acting on man's behalf. In Heb. 7, the writer compares Jesus to a specific and peculiar line of priests in the OT. Not the line of Aaron (whose descendants served in that role) but to a somewhat mystical figure—Melchizedek.

Heb. 7:17. *You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.*

Background on Melchizedek—he met and blessed Abraham in Gen. 14 and is called a "priest of God Most High." Remember, though, that this happened hundreds of years before the institution of the priesthood began.

The only other time Melchizedek is mentioned in the OT is in **Ps. 110:4**, where a prophecy about the Messiah says: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’”

Ps. 110:4 is quoted in Heb. 7:17 and 7:21. The author uses Melchizedek to point to the greater priest: Jesus.

What we should see from this passage is that Jesus’ nature as high priest is marked both by his permanence and depth of commitment.

Heb. 7:24-25. *He holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

Notice the logic here. First, v. 24 states a fact: Jesus’ role as high priest is permanent. And v. 25 draws a conclusion from this fact.

v. 24: Jesus is permanent and unchanging...

v. 25: *Consequently*, he is able to save to the uttermost.

--Steadfastness proven by his blood--

Sometimes you learn the depth of someone’s commitment toward you by what they’re willing to suffer for you.

Ancient Greek and Latin thinkers often spoke of four cardinal virtues, one of which was **fortitude** (also termed “forbearance” or “endurance”). How far is a person willing to go to uphold what was good and right?

Philosopher Josef Pieper, in his treatment of the four virtues, writes: “Fortitude that does not reach down into the depths of the willingness to die is spoiled at its root and devoid of effective power.”

Pieper’s point is that commitment typically has limitations; at some point commitment is exhausted. But true fortitude means one is willing to die for that which he or she is committed to.

Consider again **v. 25**, where we read that Jesus “is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him.” The ones he is saving are those “drawing near to God through him.” What does that mean?

Heb. 10:19. *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near to God.*

We draw near to God by the blood of Jesus. The steadfastness of God's heart—the fact that he is utterly committed to his people—is in part manifest through the depths he has gone to save us.

Consider how commitments in DC work—they're not very deep. As soon as a commitment costs someone in her career, reputation, beliefs, she'll bail.

This is not true of Jesus. He's already been abandoned, spit on, falsely accused, scourged, and crucified publicly. All this for you, like a shout from heaven saying: *I am committed to you!*

--Steadfastness guaranteed because he is unchangeable--

Heb. 7:24. *He holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.*

Jesus' permanence is supported earlier in Hebrews:

- (1) *Indestructible Life.* Jesus' life can never be taken by death, nor can it be changed by any force.

Heb. 7:16. *He has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.*

- (2) *God's Oath.* The permanence of Jesus is rooted in the declaration, or oath, of God.

Heb. 7:20-21. *This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'"*

For Jesus to change, two impossible things would have to happen: first, he would have to become susceptible to sin and death—but through the resurrection he has an "indestructible life." Second, God would have to go back on His word; but "the Lord has sworn," and the oath has been made.

Consider Sam's story of the much respected pastor who "deconverted." Thousands of people had been helped by and, in part, had come to rely upon this pastor's commitment to walk with Christ.

And then that person changed. People do change.

But God wants us to know that He will never change. He is permanent and indestructible; this is secured by God's own word.

--Steadfastness realized through his constant prayer--

Now, we may wonder: God may be faithful and unchanging and steadfast, but what about myself? What if I change and am unfaithful? Our response must be to consider the steadfast care of Jesus.

Heb. 7:25. *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."*

Here we read that Jesus is able "to save to the uttermost." Uttermost refers to **time** and **depth**. So, to "save to the uttermost" means that Jesus saves people "to the very end." He will not give up on you. It also means that Jesus saves you in every way you need saving.

How does he do this saving?

- (a) *The cross.* Christians (rightly) emphasize that Jesus provides salvation through his death on the cross. The things that would ultimately have destroyed our lives—sin and death—he has taken upon himself, sparing us the ultimate consequences.
- (b) *Constant intercession.* Christians think less often about what Jesus does for them each day. He applies the salvation he's wrought for us moment by moment. Heb. 7:25 focuses not on what Jesus has done, but on what he is doing day by day, "...since he always lives to **make intercession** for them."

The word we translate as intercession carries the idea of advocating for someone. Consider, then, that Jesus is always standing in heaven advocating for us before the Father's sovereign sway.

It's important to note that Jesus' prayers are not like ours: they are perfectly aligned with God's will, and he himself is involved in answering them.

Consider Peter. We know that Peter had a hot and cold faith for a time. He promises he'll never deny Jesus, but then he does so three times. Just prior to this, Jesus says the following to Peter:

Luke 22:31-32. *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Given Peter's denials, it might seem like Jesus' prayer had been ineffective.

But recall scene in **John 21**. Jesus finds Peter fishing and feeling dejected. Jesus calls to him from the shore, and Peter jumps in the water and swims to Jesus. Then, on the shore, knowing that Peter had denied him, Jesus asks him a question three times:

Simon, son of John, Do you love me? (vv. 15, 16, 17).

Peter, overwhelmed by the presence of his lord, can only reply: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (v. 17).

This passage gives us a window into Jesus' prayers for us. He prays that our faith would not fail; that Satan would not snatch us from the Father's hand.

He also sets out on a mission to keep us. Not by coercion, but by his presence, often felt lightly in our conscience, or through a friend, or in a hymn, or when we feel low yet sense his voice saying: *You are weary, but do you love me?* And we cannot help but answer: *Yes, Lord, you know I do.*

Jesus prays for you all the time. He prays that your faith would be strong; that you would know what is true; that you would not be lured into wrong thinking. And Jesus himself ensures these prayers are answered.

--Study questions--

Was there anything in this sermon that particularly stood out to you?

Have you been through seasons of deep uncertainty in your life? Are you in one now, or are any of your loved ones?

Do you know the comforting feeling of having an extremely steady and committed person in your life? Someone who doesn't change over time? Are there commonalities between these kinds of people?

Consider the Hebrew word *hesed*, and all it conveys about God. He is unwavering, faithful, enduring, committed, forgiving, unchangeable. Where and how do we see God display these qualities in Scripture?

Melchizedek is an interesting figure. Sort of mysterious. So little is said about him, yet even his name means “king of righteousness”! Why do you think the author of Hebrews honed in on Melchizedek? How does Melchizedek help us know and hold fast to Christ?

Christ’s permanence is confirmed by his “indestructible life” and God’s oath. Where else in Scripture do we see these truths bear out? Why is Christ’s life now “indestructible”? Does God follow through on his oaths?

Sam said he was surprised by the end of Hebrews 7:25: “...since he always lives to make intercession for them.” Does this surprise you at first glance? Do you consider much the fact that Jesus is ever-interceding for you? How ought that change how we carry on day by day?

What is one way you desire to see God shape your heart this week? Is there something you can do to help enact the truths you heard in this sermon?

--When time allows--

As usual, consider reading Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Here is [chapter 9, “The Immutability of God,”](#) and [chapter 15, “The Faithfulness of God.”](#)

[Here is Josef Pieper’s book, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*.](#) What are the four? Prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Sam shared some of one of Charles Spurgeon’s sermons earlier in the series. Spurgeon is one of those people whose work can comfort and exhort all sorts of people carrying an array of burdens. [Here’s a sermon of his on Jesus’ “Salvation to the Uttermost.”](#) [And here’s another in which he contemplates Melchizedek, and Christ’s surpassing greatness.](#)

[A helpful article on **Melchizedek** by Gospel Coalition.](#)

[A helpful article on **hesed** by the C. S. Lewis Institute.](#)