

5907U

VICTORIA STUDY WEEKEND - 2004

THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE - THAT I MIGHT KNOW HIM

Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper

Study #4: Our Great High Priest Has Come

Reading: Philippians 3

Good morning brethren and sisters and friends. Good morning! You're ready to go and hopefully eager to consider both in this talk and in the exhortation, the final theme that the apostle Paul presented in Philippians 3, that I said we would consider and that is, **the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Now if you recall from yesterday, for those that were here, the discussion centred around issues, if you like, of Jesus' life, getting to know the Father and the Son, right up to confronting the cross. Now we need to deal with things that happened after that period of time. So I'd like to first refresh your minds about the work of the priests in Israel of old!

When God created man in Genesis as we read of it in Genesis 2 and chapter 1, a wonderful relationship existed between God and His creation, between God and His man. If you think about it and you kind of reflect on what we're shown in the first couple of chapters of Genesis, you get a sense that there wasn't any kind of obstacle existing between God and man, there was nothing that stood in the way that created barriers to their communion together, their fellowship together. There was no hypocrisy that would have generated distrust or any kind of malice that would have generated fear in this relationship.

There is an Old Testament word that describes this relationship perfectly and it is the word 'shalom'; now if you had brother John Warner exhort to you (who I understand comes up to this island on occasions because of a place up in Nanaimo) his greeting for us every Sunday morning when he gives the announcements is 'shalom'. So we know the word is a word of greeting, but in its simplicity it simply means that there is 'wholeness, completeness', so if I'm talking about my fingers and my toes, it means that they are all there, you can count them, there are ten and you would say, 'okay, so that's complete, shalom', as far as my body is concerned. If we're dealing with relationships, we are saying that there are no obstacles or impediments in that relationship, there's nothing that will create a wedge or separation but, in fact, there is a whole and complete communion between the two. So just as I said, in terms of God and man, when He originally created them, there was 'shalom' between God and man. The relationship

was complete and whole, nothing missing, nothing interfering with that relationship!

The English word that 'shalom' is translated to also carries a sense of this, it is the word 'peace'; both Old and New Testament is carried over into our English word 'peace' and above all else, 'peace' from the very beginning of the bible is always 'peace with God'. Alright? So keep that in the back of your minds because the very next thing that you read when you're going through the first couple of chapters in Genesis and you get to chapter 3, you realize that what happens is that **sin shattered shalom**. There was a rupture in that wholeness, that completeness that existed between God and man, where once there was a pleasant communion now stood enmity, where once there was love and trust, now there stood a sense of fear and uncertainty, and where once there was harmony and order and life, now there stood disharmony and disorder and death! Alright? Now you wouldn't know this but a passage in Isaiah, kind sums up this, and if I could just share that with you, he says in Isaiah 59 verse 1, 'behold the LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear you'. So when sin exists in the picture, there can't be any peace with God; now when we understand this, this is basic understanding that we have from our learning in the scriptures that not only can the natural man not have peace with God, the natural man, because of his very nature, is doing the very things that generate this enmity and these obstacles. Every instinct that we have, every instinct that we have inclines in the direction of pulling away from God and not coming back to Him. So what was needed after the sin in Genesis 3, what was needed from that point on was someone who could come now **between** God and man, and repair the relationship.

Now mark this and it's very important to keep this in your minds, the man who comes between isn't doing his work on God, because God doesn't have any problems; the man who comes between works on the individuals that have created the problem. Alright! So the work of the high priest then was to come in, in this sense of intercession, to work and repair the relationship, take away the obstacles that now had existed between God and His man, close up the gap and make it possible for man to meet again with his God. That's the work of the high priest and the work of the priest. I'd like you now to open your bibles to Isaiah 59, and that's where I quoted that verse from in verse 1, where God will not hear His people, will not turn and try and work with those who turned their back on Him. Looking at Isaiah 59 verse 16, I want you to think about the problem this verse expresses to us. 'He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him, and His own righteousness sustained Him'. Now that's odd! he says there was 'no man' and he wondered that there was 'no intercessor', but when you think about it, what do you think the work of Aaron and his family was all about? wasn't it that very thing of being able to 'labour day and night' in terms of the sacrifices, to remove those obstacles? I mean, that's what their work was, so what does this tell us? You remember the day of Atonement, the sin offerings and in every way possible they were removing obstacles, and that's what their lives were dedicated to.

So what does it mean when Isaiah says, there arose a day essentially when God was looking among His people and He's looking for that one who can now stand in-between and do something about the disrepair in this relationship, and He looks among the sons of Aaron and He can't even find one to continue with this work, so much so that it has to be said earlier, there's a long list from verse 1 to verse 8 describing the people, who I suggest are the sons of Aaron. Just look back for a moment at verse 3, he says, 'your hands are defiled with blood, your fingers with iniquity, your lips have spoken lies and your tongues have muttered perversities'. This is an indictment of the very men who were suppose to be removing obstacles between God and men, they themselves, had become the ones whose fingers were doing the works of iniquity, whose very mouths were speaking lies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, whose feet ran swift to shed the blood of the innocent One. So a Redeemer is the promise of verse 16, who was going to come to Zion and He was going to come to those who turned away from transgression in Jacob, and the One who is coming is called **'the arm of the LORD'**.

So when we go to the New Testament now and I'd like you to turn over to 2 Corinthians 5, this ministry of shalom, or this ministry of peace has an entirely different sounding name; so I'd like you to go to 2 Corinthians 5 continuing our thoughts on this, verses 18 and 19. 'Now all things are of God', he says, 'who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.' Now I want you to ponder 3 things about this passage: first the word **'reconciliation'** (2643), it means 'to exchange from enmity to friendship', and that was, in fact, the work of the high priest. To take this situation of separation due to the sins that the enmity caused and to bring about this change to one of friendship, to one of companionship, that means to do that as you'll realize, if at any time you've been in any kind of argument where two people have disagreed and you're the one who has come to stand in between. You know what you spend a lot time doing, is solving the 'he said, she said' and 'whoever said', and you try to remove those obstacles that have created mis-communication and hurt feelings. Well, that is the ministry of reconciliation. Second, notice what the impediments are in verse 19, 'not imputing their trespasses onto them', alright? so that just confirms what we already knew . But here is the third thing and to me the most astonishing part about this passage, it says that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'. I ask you, where in the natural world as you've experienced, has the offended ever carried out and directed the process of reconciliation with the offender? Have you ever known that to happen? where the person who has been hurt becomes the one who takes the lead to resolve the situation? Isn't it always the other way? 'Well, I'm not going to do anything until he apologizes! oh, I'm not even going to talk to them until this is taken care of!' We have a lot to learn from the example of our Father, who has set before us precisely what we need to do, when we have been harmed, hurt or offended.

Well, while it was true that God has already reconciled us to Himself, which is what the passage is saying, this is where we begin to uncover a remarkable piece of exposition, in terms of what scripture is teaching us, it opens the door to us, I think, of a vision

concerning God and His Son, that we as a community have not fully appreciated, and now that I've challenged you with those thoughts, I'd like you to go over to Romans 5. What I'd like to suggest to you quite simply is that the work of 'peacemaking' is not ended. In 2 Corinthians and the passage concerning the sacrifice of Christ, well, let's just see what Paul has to say in Romans 5 verse 1 and 2, he says, 'Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God (there's our word 'shalom' or the New Testament counterpart to it) 'we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God'. Okay, that seems good! Now take a look at verses 6 through 10, 'For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. Up to that point everything is fine, we understand this.

This morning a little later, we're going to be remembering this very event in the emblems that we'll partake of; but now what do you make of this? Verse 9, 'Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.' What do you make of that? You understand the death of Christ in part because every Sunday you remember that, well, what do you make of that part, **we shall be saved by His life?** What do you think Jesus is doing right now? I mentioned this yesterday in passing, in fact, I think it was at the beginning of my first class. Do you envision Jesus at the right hand of the Father, sitting down next to His Father, so to speak in our imaginations obviously, (I don't think there's a physical throne), sitting down next to His Father at His Father's right hand, administering and kind of impatiently watching over the affairs of history as they roll along unto the coming day when God has now put all enemies under His feet and He returns in glory and triumph? Is that how you picture Him? Do you picture the Lord Jesus Christ there actively hearing our prayers when we pray to our Father, when we're struggling in our lives, perhaps interceding with the Father and saying, 'Let me explain to you what brother Ted means, what he's struggling with! Do you understand the Lord Jesus Christ doing that? (I won't embarrass you by asking for a response) but I know brethren have struggled with this, they've wrestled with what is the Lord doing and what's His role? how is He an intercessor? and this is a very perplexing theme, but you know, it's one of the grandest themes that we as a community do not fully comprehend, therefore, the full benefit of that understanding and the sense of our development of our faith hasn't truly been there. So let me share with you some thoughts that come from this!

Saved by His life! puts forward the thought that in the death of Christ we were in deed provided the grounds upon which we can be reconciled to our Father. The impediment of our sins and the obstacles that we have created because we have come, we have seen the Lord Jesus Christ lifted up, we've seen the mirror of our own selves in that crucifixion and we said, 'that's not right, I belong up there because I put Him there, and

so in our death in the waters of baptism, we have joined together with our Lord and said, 'not my will, but Thine be done'. So we rose up out of the waters to newness of life. So once we were alienated, now we have been reconciled in the body of Christ. Hopefully these words kind of come back to you in your reading of scripture, that we might be presented because of this joining together with our Lord, we might be presented because of this joining together with our Lord, that we might be presented unto Him as holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight. Isn't that the affect of the sacrifice of Christ? Now those of us who are older, you will know this especially - how unholy, unblameable and unreprouvable do you think you are now in the sight of God? You see, the death of Christ provided a beginning point but not an end point! So how is it, b&s, we will be made holy, unblameable, unreprouvable in the sight of God? Do you think it is God's intention that we should be forgiven forever? is that the manner of life that God wants of us? Well, I don't think so, I would suggest to you as we're going to look at, in just a moment, that it is a living Christ that is the answer to that question, because in '**the living Christ**' we have someone who still lives, ever lives, to remove the obstacles that we continue to generate in our lives of willfulness and rebellion, when we say to God, '**no**', and we go our own way because we're foolish, we're stupid, yes, all of those things are true! Sometimes we're hardened in our hearts because we're definitely going to pursue a direction. That happens to all of us! and so who is going to come and intercede for us then and do something? Well, it's an ever living Lord Jesus Christ that is going to do that! Every weakness that is there within ourselves, every obstacle that we're generating as we live our lives in Christ, every foolish word spoken, every foolish action that we've taken occasions the ceaseless labours of the Son of God that He might present us in the end, holy, unblameable, unreprouvable, before the Father.

Turn with me to Hebrews 7. Now I said that both this talk and the exhortation are picking up this theme, so pieces of what I say now are going to come back again in the exhortation, when you'll have a chance to consider this more deeply, alright? But for now I'm trying to give you a basic sense of this. In Hebrews 7 it is absolutely critical that we come to understand a fundamental teaching of scripture, and sometimes this is confusing, because we know that when Jesus hung on the cross, we have the whole imagery of the high priest taking the blood of the sacrifice, on the day of Atonement and he doesn't go outside the camp and he doesn't splatter the blood on the altar and all of you would somewhere had heard this: he takes the blood inside the Most Holy Place and into the presence of God and he sprinkles it there before the veil and on the ark. Alright? and so we know in Hebrews the parallel that when the Lord Jesus Christ died, He then arose and took the blood of His sacrifice into the presence of His Father in that sense, and there was the atoning sacrifice of Christ!

But Hebrews 7 tells us that Jesus didn't become a high priest during His ministry. Jesus was not born a high priest; isn't the argument of Hebrews 7 (and I have to beg for you to kind of reflect upon your reading of Hebrews 7), you can just look at the titles, you know, the first 9 verses actually the first 19 verses, talks about the Aaronic priesthood and the Lord Jesus Christ is not of the tribe of Aaron, is He? so He's not high priest by

right, so how did He get to be high priest? Well, that's the quote in verse 17 about becoming a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, and Melchizedek, the mark of Melchizedek is that, He (as He is presented in scripture) is presented as one who never died, even though he did die! but He's presented as one with no beginning nor end, to give to you that idea. So he's quoted as the One that if you belong to the order of Melchizedek, you belong to Him because you ever live!! So it is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, at that moment that Jesus entered into His priestly work, and that's why in His resurrection He went unto the right hand of the Father with the blood of His sacrifice and His atoning work. That is why from that moment in time, that you and I have had at the right hand of the Father, One who is actively participating as a high priest, in the work of the high priest, of removing the obstacles to 'shalom' with our Father.

So, an entirely different view emerges and now I need to show it to you starting in verse 21, he says, '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. By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. For there were many priests because they were prevented by death from continuing. (That's an awful thing - you build up a relationship with a nation and people and their children and you're doing this great work and then you die)! That was real good, and now you have to establish a relationship with someone altogether new and so there are these constant breaks in the Aaronic priesthood. But he says in verse 24, 'But He because He continues forever has an unchangeable priesthood, therefore **He is also able to save to the uttermost** those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them. For such a high priest was fitting for us, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens'.. and on he goes!

That one verse 25, is incredible! It opens the door, b&s and young people, to a vision concerning Christ that is extremely hopeful and helpful in our lives, because it is not as if we're all alone trying to work out with all of our fierce determination and the clenching of our teeth that we are going to be holy and righteous people, because we want to, we definitely want to, in the heart of our hearts, we don't come to Christ because we want to live a worldly life, we come to Christ because we see in Him the best life that ever could be lived. That's why we want to be like Christ, that's what the motivation of our religion is, it's deep in our hearts. But the wonderful thing is, that we have an high priest who ever lives, who is able to save to the uttermost! You know, in Hebrews 2 verse 14 it talks about , 'He also Himself likewise', do you realize that the same set of compounding, sort of increasing language is here in verse 25, and it literally says, 'that He is able to save, completely, totally and forever if you like, those who come to God through Him **since He ever lives to make intercession**, and you need to know something about the word 'intercession'. The word 'intercession' simply means 'to cause to meet' (1793) and Jesus is working to remove the obstacles when we sin. The Lord Jesus Christ is actively involved working in our lives, trying to remove those sins, those obstacles, the stupidity that we do, the hardness of our heart, all of those things. **He's there working day after day after day** in our lives.

Look turn over to Hebrews 5 because there's an additional piece to this, before we kind of step back and breathe in the essence of this. In chapter 5 verse 1 it says, 'For every high priest taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God that you may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant in going astray, since He Himself is also beset by weakness'. Okay, a couple of words we need to know, 'compassion' literally is the idea 'to feel and do measure with another person' (3356), so the high priest because he was a man, he understood the struggles of human beings, was able to speak and to talk with his brethren and to help them in their struggles and in their trials because he could feel and do measure with what they were feeling. Since he (and here's the key qualification) since he himself is also **beset by weakness**', and weakness does not mean 'beset by sin', 'weakness' means 'he understood, he was unable in himself to bring to completion the will of the Father' (769); now you need to grasp that point! Weakness is the idea, not just lack of strength, but it is the lack of strength to bring to completion some thing, in this case, what God wants of us. Now do you remember what we talked about yesterday, when we quoted a passage from Matthew 26 and the Lord Jesus said, 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak', and I pointed out that Jesus wasn't just talking about Peter, He was talking about Himself. His spirit was willing but His flesh was weak, guess what? it's the same word, Jesus was simply saying to you and I and you think about this, this is profound, He was saying My flesh is unable to bring to completion the will of My Father! Now that's profound because now you have to ask yourself, well, how did Jesus bring to completion the will of His Father? and we'll talk a bit about that in the exhortation which is to follow, because the answer to that question is indeed, the very example that's set before us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the second word that we need to look at, or the second passage is, as Paul himself said, 'My grace is sufficient for you' (2 Corinthians 12 verse 9 quoting the Lord Jesus saying to him) 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in **weakness**', in your inability to bring it to completion, My strength, Paul, can bring it to completion. Now let me give you a hint to the question I just asked. But Jesus says to Paul, 'you can't do it, your flesh is weak, but you see, I now have strength, and I am able to give you the strength, Paul, which you don't have in yourself'. So Paul says, I'd rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest on me and therefore I take pleasure in infirmities; for when I am weak then am I strong'. **The power of the resurrected Christ** is what Paul is talking about. But this can only be true if, in fact, Jesus, because you know, he was talking about the Aaronic priest in verses 1 and 2 with implication to Jesus, but this can only be true, if in fact, Jesus shared our flesh and blood. Also you know, we talked about that yesterday, chapter 2 verse 14 (and you can look back there if you want to) Jesus in every way was identical to us. That's why the Trinity, the elevation of God to this level of replacement literally of the eternal One, is such a damaging belief in Christianity, it destroys the very fabric of our hope in Christ if, in fact, Christ is not like us and had not experienced everything that we experience including the extinction of death, then there is no true way the Lord Jesus Christ could understand me. An angel in flesh doesn't understand me, God in flesh (so to speak) is

not the same as me, but in Christ Jesus redeemed, I see One who was and is like me and we see what He's come to!

Now this opens the door, the writer of Hebrews has just used this theme throughout the book of Hebrews! Now what is fascinating is that in chapter 5, he opens up our insight to something about the Lord Jesus Christ by a word that he uses, and I want to take just a few minutes to talk about this word. In verse 8 he says, 'Though He was a son yet He learned obedience by the things which he **suffered**'; that word 'suffered', if you go back to Hebrews 2 and look at verse 10 (please take a look at these verses) he says, 'It was fitting for Him (and he's speaking of God here) 'for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**'. Now I'd like to ask a few questions and have a little discussion through the Sunday School; what do you think of, what comes to your mind or jumps into your head, about Christ's sufferings? pain, His sacrifice, okay! if I said 'Christ's sufferings' to you, you're thinking of this? anything else? temptation and sin, and struggle! You do think of the circumstances He goes through, the external circumstances? do you think of His cross? do you think of Him in Gethsemane? do you think of His prayers? do you think of Him before the high priest? when you think of the 'sufferings of Christ' do you go through or think of those kinds of things? as well, right? You think of the whole big picture of Jesus, maybe the passion of Christ is the best way to talk about it! The sufferings of Christ, the passions of Christ, the things that He went through and endured, and perhaps as we come up I would like you to go over to Romans 7 (please keep your place in Hebrews because we'll be right back there).

Romans 7 and I want you to take a look at verse 5, 'For when we were in the flesh (my version says) the passions of sin which were aroused by the Law were at work in our members to bear fruit unto death'. Well, the word 'passions of sin', what do you think of when you think of 'passion'? I know the passion of Christ, but what do you think of when you think of passion? desires, emotions, things that are stirring inside of us, well that, in fact, is the meaning of this word. The word '**suffering**' (3804) isn't so much talking about external circumstances, it's talking about the internal turmoil that is going on when we're undergoing crises, and I think Duncan said something about, 'the struggle in the garden'. It isn't the garden that we focus on when using the word 'suffering'; it is the internal agonizing that Jesus was going through, those circumstances that He experienced, that the word is referring to! and how is it helpful to us? How is it that using a word that describes internal emotions help us? because you know, it doesn't matter what the external circumstances are, all of us can understand what loneliness is! because we've been alone and struggled with that inside, we know the emotions that that generates. All of us have experienced being cast off say by friends or people turning away from us, that's a physical circumstance, and it may be in different ways and different circumstances but we know what it feels like inside. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't have to go through our experiences, and we don't need to go through His experiences, to know the heart of one another. You see, in every way the Lord Jesus Christ went through those experiences that generated in Him the struggle, the turmoil, the anguish, the wrestling in terms of those temptations and trials, and it

generated the same emotions that are generated in us when we go through our particular circumstances and trials. So He **knows our sorrows!** you know the Old Testament, Isaiah 53 says 'He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief', now you understand what the Hebrew is saying, He is a man who has experienced what we have experienced, and wrestled with what we have wrestled with.

So when you go back to chapter 5, it says in verse 2, 'That the high priest was able to feel and do measure', that is, he was able to have compassion, 'to feel and do measure', 'to those who were ignorant and were going astray' because he was beset with his own set of weaknesses. If this was true of the Aaronic priesthood that they could do that, they had their differences, you know, the high priest had a different life from everybody else in the nation virtually, but you see, he also had the same emotions, the same struggles, the same trial going on inside his heart, so he could understand it. Well then, what would you make then of a man for whom this is true? verse 7 and 8, 'who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. Though He was a Son yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered'. Do you know what the problem is? the problem with the Aaronic high priest is, they are learners! they are going through the process of life, as they're going along trying to help you. I don't know how many of you would like to do this, would you like to go to a dentist that is just learning? how about a surgeon? I don't know if you've ever read any of those books about surgeons describing their first surgeries? I mean, I was horrified with this one I was reading, he's talking about doing an appendectomy and he's pressing so lightly that he can't begin to make the first incision and the chief surgeon is saying, press harder, press harder. Then he pressed harder and cut the man's intestine! I'm saying to myself, I'm glad it wasn't me! I don't want people experimenting on me! But what the writer to the Hebrews is saying is, that's the problem with the Aaronic priesthood - they're all learners; how can they tell me what it's like to die? They've never died! they may be older but they don't know what it's like to die; the Lord Jesus Christ on the other hand, completed the whole process of human life, from beginning to end and because He completed that process, He knows what we need! He knows by His own experiences, how to help within every point in our life to the very end He knows how to help us, to intercede, to strengthen us, and to be with us. That's why it says in verse 18 of chapter 2, that 'He Himself hath suffered being tempted, and because He has He is able to aid or help those who are tempted'.

That's the man of sorrows! and that's the high priest that we see; it is only an introduction and as I'll say in the exhortation, we're going to think more about this, about what we have seen in the Lord Jesus Christ for me, is perhaps the most humbling thought that can come! This is what I want to leave you with, is an image in your mind. Imagine the day when you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, when I imagine that day, b&s, I reflect upon my life! I know all the things that I've done that are wrong, I'm not a perfect person; I know when I look into that man's eyes, I'm going to be looking into the eyes of the man who every moment that I've been alive, He's been ceaselessly working to remove all those obstacles I've been creating. All those things that turn the Father

away, He's been working and labouring and sweating, so to speak, to remove from my life those obstacles, and I'm going to look at the man who truly is, my Saviour!