

Hebrews 5:7-10.

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus Built an Eternal Legacy.

- 1. Through a Life Dedicated to God's Will.**
- 2. So that We Might Benefit Eternally.**
- 3. Let us Honor that Legacy.**

Sports can be a welcome distraction from the everyday grind of life. That has certainly been the case this past weekend, as young men have given their all in an entertaining effort to cement a lasting legacy of greatness in the NCAA basketball tournament known as March Madness. But every once in a while we are reminded how much dedication, determination, blood, sweat, tears, and suffering are endured by athletes especially on the highest levels of sport. Early this week, before the first tip of the basketball tournament, it was the National Football League that grabbed the sports headlines as several young talented players under the age of 30 decided to retire due to health concerns.

This list included Chris Borland who had recently completed a successful rookie year as a linebacker for the San Francisco 49ers. He was poised to make a big impact, to be a big star in the league for a long time, and make millions of dollars. But he walked away from it all fearing that the wear and tear of the game, especially the threat of concussions, would be too much for his body and mind to take. He walked away from the game and no one could really blame him, no one could really hold it against him for making the decision that he did: to walk away. There was so much at stake in his life, and his well-being, and in the lives of the people that he loves.

The daily grind, the physical punishment, the mental anguish, that a professional or even a college athlete has to endure is not a small thing. But it doesn't come close to what Jesus endured for our sakes. As we come before our God this morning to praise him for his gift of Jesus we certainly come for more than a welcome distraction or mere entertainment. We come for rest from our daily grind to be refreshed by the good news of our eternal salvation. This is the lasting legacy of our

Savior, Jesus Christ. He defeated sin and death and hell for us, by his suffering, death, and resurrection. However, I think it is safe to say that we don't always consider or appreciate fully the kind of daily grind that our Savior endured to win this victory. I don't think we always consider what all went into our Savior's work and how he dealt with the daily struggles of life for our sake.

No one could have held it against Jesus if he simply walked away. The perfect Son of God was tasked with giving up his throne in heaven and living as a human being in a terribly sinful world. During his days on earth, Jesus would have been called on each day to go through the grind of each day and to do it perfectly. And not only was he to live a perfect life, but he would do this while carrying the sins of the world on his shoulders. He would do this while gradually taking a step closer to his impending suffering and death. The daily grind, the physical exertion, the mental anguish, must have been incredible, far greater than any athlete has ever had to endure in the weight room, on the court, or on the field of play. The daily anguish of body and soul and mind that Jesus endured for your sake was greater than anyone else has ever experienced. That anguish and sorrow all seemed to come to a head as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here he would sweat drops of blood. Here he would cry out in with loud shouts of anguish as he went to his Father, asking him to take this cup of suffering from him, if it was the will of God.

From a human viewpoint no one could really be offended if Jesus simply walked away; the pain he endured was great. The stress, the physical and emotional toil was incredible, beyond what anyone else could bear. But he could not walk away, for there was too much at stake. More valuable than a million dollar salary, more precious than success or fame, Jesus had come to live and die for us. He came to accomplish our salvation and establish an everlasting legacy.

This was no easy task. This was not a mere walk in the park for this divine being, but it was a daily struggle for our Savior who had to be true God *and* true man to be our substitute and accomplish our salvation. Our lesson gives us a brief glimpse at the difficult journey that our Savior took to the cross and how it was indeed quite a daily struggle for him. ***7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.***

Like an athlete who strains and struggles to train so that he may produce a winning result in the big game, even more so Jesus exerted himself to win the victory of salvation for us. Like an athlete who give his all, who sacrifices blood sweat and tears, who shouts out with loud cries of adrenaline and anguish and may even be moved to tears because he is so invested in striving for that goal of victory, even more than that Jesus truly gave his all. He sacrificed blood sweat and tears. In his daily anguish he often went to his Father in prayer, in his anguish in the Garden of

Gethsemane he shouted out with loud cries. He was moved to tears because he was invested in saving us. Finally, He laid down his very life by dying on the cross to save us.

This is the compelling story of the ultimate sacrifice that so many have been drawn to by God's grace. This is what Jesus will forever be known for; his willingness to live and die for us. He went through all of this, the daily suffering, the weight of sin, the impending peril of a horrible death; he went through all of this for us, in order to be the source of eternal salvation. This is the eternal legacy that our Savior has established. This is the legacy that we treasure as those who believe in him.

Others would have certainly walked away, but Jesus did not. Each day he chose that path, because that was the very reason the Father sent him. Even when he endured such turmoil in the Garden of Gethsemane he continued on toward the cross. That was the reason that he came. He himself said as much. He came to go down that difficult path of suffering for our benefit; so that we might be saved. He came to be lifted up so that he might draw all men to himself. He came to struggle and win for us, so that he might be the source of eternal victory and salvation for all who believe.

He carried us to victory. His effort alone saved us. But as a star player often has the ability to make those around him better, so too Jesus has a similar and very beneficial influence on us. His struggle, his determination, compels us and teaches us how to be determined and to struggle as we press on to lay hold of the victory for which Christ has won for us.

How do you and I handle the daily grind of life? Often, not well. We grumble and complain. We curse and swear. We might even look to walk away from faith and obedience for a time to soothe our pain or cope with the daily grind through unhealthy and sinful means. But Jesus shows us a better way. He shows us to take it to the Lord in prayer. He shows us that it is not wrong to struggle with God and cry out in loud cries and to shed tears as we come before our God looking for answers. Life can be difficult. Struggling against sin, dealing with death, coping with physical and emotional pain, these are things that wear on us daily. These are things that we are to take to our God. He is not only the one who saves us, but he is the one who hears us.

We are blessed to have Jesus as our Savior and our Great High Priest. We are blessed with one who can relate with our suffering. As our Great High Priest he would make the ultimate sacrifice for us, and then he would rise again so that he might be exalted to the right hand of God to be our Priest and our King in heaven. He knows exactly what we are going through and he speaks to the Father on our behalf and he is also our King who rules over all this with us on his mind. And knowing this we have this comfort and assurance and source of strength and salvation; we can approach our King and Priest in our time of need and he will rescue us and give us aid.

That brings us to the comparison that is made between Jesus and the Melchizedek. You may be about as unfamiliar with the biblical figure Melchizedek as you are unfamiliar with former 49ers linebacker Chris Borland. But Melchizedek is mentioned a few times in the Bible and is a quite mysterious figure but one that is held in high regard. God's Word even refers to him as a type of Christ. Melchizedek was a King of Salem that helped Abraham and Melchizedek was unique for several reasons. He was both the King of Salem (Salem later called Jerusalem means peace), and also the High Priest. This was very rare. Melchizedek was a mysterious figure in that he was a High Priest of the true God in Jerusalem before God established the priesthood through Aaron and the Levites who would follow. While we are told some about his office and how he helped Abraham we are not told much about his beginning or his end. He, therefore, has this characteristic of having no beginning and no end, he was just there. Therefore the writer makes this connection between Jesus and Melchizedek when he describes Jesus as a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus would have a lasting legacy, an eternal legacy, of being our King of Peace and our High Priest who will fulfill those roles until the end of time.

He was the sacrifice and the one who made the sacrifice on behalf of the people. He is the one who speaks to the Father as our Mediator. Crucified, risen, and ascended. Made perfect or having completed his goal of cross, tomb, and throne, Jesus is the Great High Priest and now he is also the King who rules over all things. And this is all because He was the Lamb that went uncomplaining forth to suffer and die for us.

Christ Jesus has established this lasting legacy of commitment to us. How do we honor his legacy? Who are we? What are we known for? Let us be known as those who daily take up the struggle of faith. Let us strive against complaining, sinning, and coping with our problems in unhealthy ways. Instead let us cry out to our God in prayer. Let us struggle and strive and work to obey our LORD's commands. For we will forever be thankful for the one who endured so much for us.

Our lasting legacy should have been death and hell. But Jesus came to save us and while the journey was so very difficult he was unwilling to walk away. The stakes were too high. We were too precious to him; therefore, He served as our substitute. He suffered in our place. He won the victory so that we might share in his glory. So let us honor that legacy in the way that we live as his children who honor him and his servants who gladly obey our King, our Great High Priest, and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.