

Image: Me as a 13 year old. Performing in order to be loved and accepted by those around me.
Performance trap.

Need: Do we fall into the same trap with God? You bet. We feel that we must perform in order to be loved and accepted by Him. There are whole religions built on this idea...that we must do certain things in order to be with God forever.

Context: Judaism was one of those sets of beliefs. The Law was set up to give the people of God some access to God. The Law was given in Exodus. But God knew that men would not live up to it...so He gave them Leviticus. This institution of the Law was governed by a group of people who acted as mediators between the people of Israel and God. The priests. the author of Hebrews has been arguing that Jesus is a superior priest to those of the OT Law. Remember that these believers were in danger of retreating back into Judaism as things got tough around them. He's going to argue that the performance of the people and the priests was totally inferior to the performance of the perfect priest Jesus...so don't leave Him. Those in slavery to the Law were trapped by a performance that would never be good enough to do what it hoped.

Preview: Let's look together at the problem of performance.

- I. Problem: Our performance can't get us what we need. The Law and priest associated with it could not bring people perfect fellowship with God.
 - A. It was not designed for this
 1. **Gal. 3:24** – “*Law was a tutor that pointed us to need for Christ...because no one is justified by Law.*” **Rom. 3:20**, “*through the Law we become conscious of sin.*” That's why **Stephen** was executed...he said they never kept the Law and that something more was needed.
 2. Law pointed out the need for better access. The sacrifices reminded people that their sin kept them at bay from God. The Law kept people a “safe” distance from God. They needed unrestricted access. *My Ryder Cup ticket gets me in but keeps me a safe distance away from the players.*
 - B. It was not capable of accomplishing perfect fellowship.
 1. Perfection couldn't come through the Law (**11-12**). If it could have, it would have, and David wouldn't have written about another. He wrote some 400 years later at the height of the Levitical priesthood, and yet he spoke of another.
 2. The Law and priesthood was, rather, weak and unprofitable (**18-19**).
 - a. **Weak:** helplessness. It was helpless to accomplish what we needed.
 - b. **Unprofitable:** It had nothing to offer us. No benefit.
 - C. This weakness (of Law and priest) necessitated a new kind of priest who would usher in a new kind of Law...a Law of grace (**15-19**). Paul puts it like this in **Romans 8:3**, “*For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His Son.*” In the same way, our performance is inherently and critically flawed. So no matter how good it may be...it's not good enough.
- II. Sol'n: Someone else gave the perfect performance. Jesus came as a new kind of priest to finish the job that the Law was not able to accomplish.
 - A. He was different than the weak ones.
 1. Different tribe (**13-15**)
 2. Of eternal substance, not merely material. And so He was not bound by weakness (**15 – “forever”, 16**). Indestructible.
 - B. He was ordained by God Himself (**20-22**)
 1. Levitical priest temporal and granted based on the family of your dead ancestors.
 2. Jesus was designated by an oath from God. An oath which declared that He would be a priest forever.

Hebrews 7:11-25

- C. He is an eternal priest with an eternal priesthood (23-25). His perfect performance will last forever.
 - 1. He never dies and, thus, never loses His priesthood (23-24). *The Jewish historian Josephus suggests that there were 83 High Priests in Judaism from the time of Aaron to AD 70.* But Jesus is one of a kind because He is eternal.
 - 2. He accomplishes in His priesthood what the Law couldn't. He grants perfect access to God's children through faith.

III. So we can rest securely in the work of our priest, Jesus. There is no need to try to perform. We need cling only to Christ.

- A. First, because of God. He won't break His oath (21-22)
 - 1. He's sworn and won't change His mind. *as a kid, changing the rules in mid-game to try to get an edge.* God won't change the rules...it's not Jesus today, then trees tomorrow. He's made an oath that the way to Him will always be Jesus.
 - 2. And so, Jesus exalted position in the presence of God, serves to guarantee for us that our access is eternally granted because it is dependant on our eternal mediator who eternally sits at God's right hand. He is our guarantee. His very existence at the right hand of God is all the intercession we need.
- B. And so our way to God is written in stone.
 - 1. We now have the "perfection" that the Law couldn't afford through faith in Jesus.
 - 2. He is able to bring complete and final salvation by means of His exalted status in the presence of God.
- C. And so, through faith in Jesus, we don't need to perform. Just rest and approach (19)
 - 1. We don't need to try to perform for God to gain His favor. Not like some king who has his subjects dance or perform or bring him gifts and then decides if they can have an audience. In fact, we couldn't even if we tried.
 - 2. All we do is believe that Jesus is our access by virtue of His paying the penalty for our sins. When that happens, we become God's adopted sons and daughters. At that, we can draw near in hope.

I'm not a good dancer. If anything in my life depended upon me dancing, I would be in a heap of trouble. I'm glad my salvation doesn't depend on me performing for God. If it did, I'd be in a heap of trouble. But even though I know that, sometimes I don't live like it. I still think, in times of weakness, that I can do things to make God like me more. To think that my access somehow depends on my performance. It's in these times that this text makes perfect sense. My access depends on my priest...who happens to be eternal, always interceding for me.

You got a minute? Take a look at **Revelation 5:1-6a, 9** "Lamb slain." The reason my access is eternal is because my priest died. He paid to rectify the one thing that kept me forever out of God's presence...my sin. *As the song says, "I'm forgiven because you were forsaken...I'm accepted, You were condemned."* And so this great exchange has taken place. I traded my sin for Christ's righteousness. That's what Paul says in **2 Cor. 5:21** *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that through Him we might become the righteousness of God.* And all that through simple faith in Jesus. If were up to me and my performing, I would have fallen short in a million lifetimes. But my priest died so I could rest forever in Him. The Lamb who rules, standing as if slain.