

**HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part nineteen****Sunday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - 10 a.m. - Teaching #1974****Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON****OUR OBEDIENT HIGH PRIEST AND HIS OBEDIENT FOLLOWERS**

Our text is going to mark ***similarities*** between the Christ as our high priest and them major on ***contrasts***:

**Hebrews 5:1-10** - "For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. [2] He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. [3] Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. [4] And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. [5] So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; [6] as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." [7] In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. [8] Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. [9] And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, [10] being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek."

You can see how the chapter divisions occasionally break up a single flow of thought. The last three verses of chapter 4 pull our thinking around the ministry of Jesus as our perfect and sympathetic high priest. And the word "**For**" at the beginning of chapter 5 signals we're still dealing with the subject of the priesthood.

If there is a slight shift it would be our writer will now deal with ***all*** high priests in **verses 1-4**, and then move on to make comparisons and contrasts with the Christ, our eternal high priest, in **verses 5-10**.

1) **FOR EFFECTIVE PRIESTLY MINISTRY THERE MUST BE A SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE THE PRIEST REPRESENTS**

**Hebrews 5:1** - "For every high priest ***chosen from among men*** is ***appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God***, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."

The priest must be ***....chosen from among men....*** An ***angel*** would be a terrible high priest. An angel would have no understanding of the human condition. An angel couldn't fully care. An angel couldn't help us ***get*** to God. And getting to God is what the priesthood is all about.

All through the Old Testament the ***priestly*** mission moves in the opposite direction of the ***prophetic*** mission. ***Prophets*** move in mission from ***God to man***. They reveal. They proclaim. The movement is from ***up to down***. ***Priests*** minister from ***man toward God***. They lead in repentance. They offer sacrifices. They enable worship. The movement is from ***down to up***. Something must be accomplished in the ministry of the priest to ***open up a way*** to reach a holy God.

This is what our writer means with those very precise words, ***....appointed to act on behalf of men,*** and ***....in relation to God*** (5:1). Men and women like us ***can't get to God***. God would be nothing but an unbearable ***threat*** to the likes of us.

The solution to our dilemma is some kind of ***sin remedy***. All through the Old Testament there must be some form of payment for sin - some sort of substitution. Our writer wraps up verse one with the divine plan - ***For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.***

Our New Testament writer feels we need the repeated Old Testament lesson. All priests are useless in their help to the people apart from the offering of sacrifices. Priests offering mere sympathy are an empty hope. Lectures about divine law and morality won't change the sinner's relation to God. Worship offered apart from the sacrificial shed blood will be offensive to a holy God.

Notice carefully the emphatic nature of **verse one** - ***....every high priest is appointed....to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.*** ***Every high priest....*** There were never any exceptions to this rule in the Old Testament. God was up to something in all those dark bloody Old Covenant years. He's getting us all ready for something big.

2) **FOR EFFECTIVE PRIESTLY MINISTRY THERE MUST BE COMPASSION FOR THE WEAKNESSES OF THE PEOPLE**

**Hebrews 5:2 - "He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness."**

There are some hard passages of Scripture which we ought to appreciate more than we do. There are scattered texts where we have pictures painted of the only way people like us - "***ignorant and wayward***" (5:2) - can think of God apart from the revelation of the sympathetic priesthood of our ascended Redeemer. Take away that high priest and here's the only way we can consider our relationship to a Holy God:

**Matthew 25:24-25 - "He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, [25] so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."**

Never skip over verses like that. They are ***divinely intended passages***. They are crafted to drive us deeper into consideration of our need for a merciful, sympathetic high priest. This servant isn't inaccurate in his assessment of the master. Read the text for yourself. Nothing in these verses say he was mistaken. In fact, his master ***confirms*** this servant's evaluation of the assignment - **Verse 26 - "But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'**

His fear is well grounded. Here is a man who is crippled by the awareness his master's expectations exceed his results. There is more terror here than love. And we're meant to look straight into the law of God and the fearful effects it has without an interceding high priest.

Look at this fear-bound servant. His words are marked by sheer ***task*** awareness. We are forced to stare at religious duty divorced from confidence in mercy and forgiveness and sympathy. We are not able to live with God with confidence in our own abilities and merits.

Now read your Bible. You start to see dark shadows of God's solution. God fills up the whole Old Testament with ***priests***. And they are ***people*** priests, not ***angel*** priests. They are deliberately ***non-threatening*** priests. They are priests like us. They arise from the ashes of our own imperfections. This is the only hope we have. Sinners need the ministry of priests who can "...deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward...." (5:2).

Now, as we saw last week, not all priests lived up to their calling. The Scriptures are filled with priests who were anything but ***gentle*** with the ignorant and the wayward. And our writer now tells us what the problem was for all those Old Covenant years:

**Hebrews 5:3-4 - "Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice *for his own sins* just as he does for those of the people.[4] And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was."**

Here we begin to unravel the dilemma. The same humanity that should have made all these Old Testament priests ***gentle*** with fellow sinners also made them ***greedy and cruel and indifferent*** in their divine assignment.

Had God made a mistake? Was the whole mission a grand failure? No. God was unpacking an unforgettable, constantly repeated ***reminder***. The people knew they kept sinning year by year. And the people saw ***their high priest*** offering the same sacrifice - for ***them*** and for ***himself*** - over and over again.

That word - ***reminder*** - is the exact word our writer uses to describe what was going on for all those centuries of priesthood and sacrifice:

**Hebrews 10:3-4 - "But in these sacrifices *there is a reminder of sins* every year. [4] For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."**

Notice, not a ***removal*** of sins - not ***satisfaction*** for sins - and not a ***solution*** for sins. No. It was a ***reminder*** of sins still standing - still awaiting a solution.

Stay with this text. **Verse 5** marks a striking division. The writer moves from the analysis of the Old Covenant priesthood in general to the ***fulfillment*** of that priesthood in God the Son, Jesus Christ.

3) IT IS THE SOLUTION FOR HUMAN SIN THAT DRIVES THE WHOLE MISSION OF THE INCARNATION

Hebrews 5:5-6 - "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" [6] as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

Our writer is knitting together two aspects of the Messiah's mission. The one is the **root** and the other is the **fruit**. The **root** is the once-for-all Incarnation of God the Son in human flesh and nature. The **fruit** is the **ongoing** high priestly intercession on behalf of sinners.

Because our writer is writing to these Jewish believers he goes back again to the two quotes from the Psalms he used earlier. The **first** quote about His **divine Sonship** comes from **Psalm 2:7**. And the **second** about His **priesthood** comes from **Psalm 110:4**.

Psalm 2:7 - "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, You are my Son; today I have begotten you."

Psalm 110:4 - "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'"

Quotes from the Psalms in the book of Hebrews do not make for smooth reading. Our minds don't like to see the flow of verses jumbled and bumped about. But we simply must see what our writer is doing here. It is at the heart of evangelical orthodoxy.

Think back to the problem presented in verse 3 - "Because of this he [that is, all earthly priests] is **obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.**" The humanity that made sympathy for the ignorant and wanderer possible also made faithfulness and success in such a holy priesthood impossible. The Old Testament is full of moral flops as priests.

But what if there was a high priest who was fully sympathetic - **gentle with the "ignorant and wayward"** [2] - and **at the very same time** absolutely pure and faithful in fulfilling the very law the rest of us failed to keep? What if we actually had a High Priest who could provide **sympathy** and solid actual **righteousness** before God at the very same time?

And suddenly we begin to see why our writer takes the time to link together the **incarnation (Psalm 2:7 - "You are my Son....")** with the High Priesthood (**Psalm 110:4 - "You are a priest forever...."**). This priesthood is the whole reason for the Incarnation. It was all about God providing a high priest who was both **sympathetic** and **faithfully righteous**.

In Christ's death, resurrection and ascension we don't just have a **reminder** of sin. We have **purification** from sin - just as our writer stated in his opening remarks in Hebrews 1:1-3 - "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. [3] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...."

This is where our writer was going all along.

4) HERE IS THE PROOF JESUS BORE OUR SINS ON THE CROSS

Hebrews 5:7 - "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence."

We're not specifically told the occasion of these "**loud cries**" of agonizing prayer, but the most glaring example we know of is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. Then there was that mysterious cry of abandonment on the cross - "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"

Those are deeply mysterious words. And we would have no idea of the weight behind that cry without the prophet's explanation of the situation in Isaiah 53:6 - "...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

How shall we give meaning to that sentence? I hate it when I see my own mind resting in mere religious slogans. Constantly work hard to attach ***meaning*** to frequently repeated phrases and verses and worship songs.

Consider the "***iniquity of us all***" laid on Jesus. Think of the effects of the fall on mankind. Have you ever had your stomach react to the vileness of something you saw or heard? Consider the net effect of ***all*** iniquity in this world. Think about it. Let your mind sweep over just some of the big revolting categories. Think about all the wars - the violence - the beatings - the racism - the slavery - the drug trade - organized crime - all perversion and twisted sexual activity - the deceit in high places - all addictions - all the cursing - all child abuse - all economic corruption - all areas of entrenched genocide - consider all the revenge - broken promises - consider every cruel and perverse sentence - think about it ***all***.

And, if you've ever felt even two minutes of a churning stomach - if you've ever had to quell just a few minutes of inward rage - if ever you missed one night's sleep over the injustice and stain just a few moments of depravity deposit in your brain - now take it all - ***all of it*** - and place it ***at the very same moment in time*** into the absolutely pure, divine, holy, unstained heart of your Lord. That's what's behind those "***loud cries***."

***How could anyone stand it!*** And yet you should be thankful for those cries. Those cries are proof positive there's an atoning work taking place in the body of Jesus on the cross.

5)

#### **IF JESUS WAS PERFECTLY OBEDIENT TO FATHER GOD AND MY TRUST IS IN HIM, DOES IT MATTER IF I AM OBEDIENT OR NOT?**

**Hebrews 5:8-10** - "Although he was a son, ***he learned obedience through what he suffered.*** [9] And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation ***to all who obey him,*** [10] being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek."

Our writer will pick up on the priestly order of Melchizedek in chapter 7. But there is another issue arising out of these verses. One might think, given the marvelous description of the divine nature of our Lord in **Hebrews 1:1-2**, that the Son would be exempt from the learning described in these verses.

Yet, here we learn that the incarnate Son, who was "***without sin***" throughout his earthly life, "***learned obedience through what he suffered***" (5:8).

Tread carefully here. He didn't ***learn obedience*** by ***unlearning disobedience***. So He didn't learn obedience the same way the rest of us learn obedience.

But there's another way in which He learned obedience ***exactly*** the same way we disciples must learn obedience. In His incarnation, for the very first time, the Son learned obedience by ***resisting opposition to obedience***. And our text affirms the Son learned obedience in the face of "***suffering***" (8). For the very first time the Son's faithfulness to the Father was ***challenged - challenged by Satan - challenged by the surrounding culture - challenged by fatigue - challenged by ridicule - challenged by false gods and multiple religions.***

It's ***different*** staying faithful in those situations. The Son ***learned obedience the same way we all must learn obedience***. We must all process what remaining faithful to God means in ***constantly changing situations***.

We learn from our faithful High Priest we never learn faithfulness to Jesus ***just once***. There are no ***one-time decisions*** to obey Jesus. Obedience must be ***freshly forged*** as long as there is ***fresh demand and opposition***.

This is what's behind our writer's nudge toward obedience in this text - **Hebrews 5:9** - "And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation ***to all who obey him....***" Jesus knows about the cost of obedience. We have a High Priest who can forgive "***the ignorant and the wayward***" (5:2) because He knows the cost of learned obedience when it comes through hostility and opposition and suffering.

But this ***learned obedience*** in the Son also makes Him ***treasure*** obedience. Anything hard won is more deeply prized. So there is nothing casual or light-hearted in the Son's call for obedience in His disciples. He's been there. He knows the cost and the value of learned obedience. But His ***priestly sympathy*** must never be treated as ***priestly indifference***. Our sinless High Priest ***resisted and abhorred sin all His earthly life***. This is the path He Himself walked. This is the only path He shares

with us. This is His only invitation.

***"There is something appropriate in the fact that the salvation which was procured by the obedience of the Redeemer should be made available to the obedience of the redeemed." F. F. Bruce.***