

## A PRIEST PERFECTED THROUGH SUFFERING (5:7-10)

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

1. Even though Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death," he experienced an agonizing death on the cross.

How does Jesus' prayer in the garden serve as a pattern for our prayer when we are facing difficulty?

How should the fact that God found it necessary to say "no" to his beloved son, shape our expectations in prayer?

2. It is hard for us to imagine Jesus learning obedience or being made perfect, but that is exactly how the writer of Hebrews describes the incarnation. Jesus learned obedience by being obedient. He was perfected by suffering.

What does this tell us about the importance of our obedience?

What does this tell us about how God perfects us through suffering?



One of the most challenging tasks a new believer will ever undertake is to work their way through the Old Testament. There are riveting stories and inspirational passages to be sure, but sometimes it feels like they are few and far between. It doesn't take us long to realize we have entered a strange new world, with odd customs and very different ideas about how the world works. It is easy to get lost in rituals, genealogies, and regulations. Some passages make us blush. Others make us wince. It doesn't help that the Old Testament doesn't come to us in chronological order. It's often hard to follow the story or even to know what the story is all about. I am convinced there is a special place in heaven for those who make it through Leviticus on their first reading.

The Old Testament, however, becomes incredibly rich when we realize it is preparing us for Christ. Jesus taught his disciples to read backwards. After his resurrection, Jesus works his way into a conversation of a couple of defeated disciples. He listens as they lament the loss of their beloved teacher and Lord. He offers a mild rebuke. "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Then he retells the Old Testament story. "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Later that same evening he picks up where he left off with a larger group. "'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (see Luke 24:25-27; 44-45)."

After Pentecost the disciples tell us the story Jesus told them. The gospel they share demonstrates how the big moves of the Old Testament find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

No one tells the Old Testament story better than the writer of Hebrews. Our author picks up another rich Old Testament image in chapter 4. He tells us Jesus is everything and so much more that God had in mind when he appointed Aaron to be a high priest. In the same way Jesus is better than angels and greater than Moses, he is the perfect high priest.

#### OUR HIGH PRIEST (4:14-16)

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

1. How does the writer of Hebrews describe our high priest?
2. While every other high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year for a few brief moments, Jesus ascended into the heaven (a far more holy, holy of holies) where "he always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25)."  
  
How does Jesus' immediate access to the Father make him a far greater high priest?
3. This section begins and ends with a word of exhortation (or a command). What are the two things the writer of Hebrews encourages us to do (v. 14 and v. 16)?
4. What does it mean to hold firmly to the faith we profess?
5. Why should we approach God's throne with confidence?
6. What is significant about the fact that the writer of Hebrews refers to God's throne, which is often portrayed as a place of judgment, as a "throne of grace?"
7. What will we find when we approach God's throne of grace with confidence?

#### EVERY OTHER HIGH PRIEST (5:1-3)

*Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. <sup>3</sup> This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.*

1. How would you describe the difference between our high priest and every other high priest?
2. How does the writer of Hebrews describe those the high priest ministers to? How do these two words capture the heart of sin?
3. How does the high priest deal with those who are ignorant and going astray? Why is this important?
4. An ordinary high priest not only relates to us in our temptation, he relates to us in our sin. He must offer sacrifices for himself before he offers sacrifices for the people. Does the fact that Jesus experienced temptation without sinning, help or hinder his ability to empathize with us? Explain your answer.

#### A PRIEST APPOINTED BY GOD (5:4-6)

<sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." <sup>6</sup> And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The author of Hebrews draws on two distinct Psalms to highlight God's appointment of Jesus as our High Priest. Both Psalms speak of the coming Messianic King. The quotation from Psalm 2 is an echo of 2 Samuel 7, where God promises to be a Father to David's descendants as they ascend to the throne. "Son" in this instance is a regal title. The second quotation is from Psalm 110, where the king is also said to be "a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Priest and king where distinct offices in Israel. A priest could not be a king, and a king could not be a priest. Melchizedek was an exception. He was both priest and king. Jesus is the far greater exception. He is our priest and king.

1. Why is it important to think of Jesus as our king?
2. Why is it important to think of Jesus as our high priest?