

HEBREWS *Fear to Faith*

STUDY 6

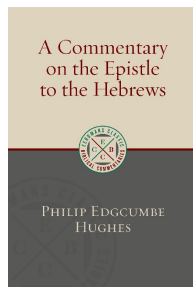
Encouragement to Endure – & Enter!

A. Our High Priest -- refuge for the guilt-ridden! [4:14-5:4]

4:14,15 What is the basis of our confidence when we sin? (2:17; 1 John 2:1,2)

[1] [4:14] It is perhaps necessary to emphasize that it is *Jesus* who has passed through the heavens as our transcendent Lord – the same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem and died at Calvary. The identity between the one who walked in Palestine and the one who is now crowned with glory and honor is essential for the ultimate glorification of our redeemed humanity. There is no place in the New Testament for any docetic concept of the risen Christ. Resurrection means bodily resurrection or it means nothing at all. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 170

[2] [4:14] “After terrifying us, the Apostle now comforts us,” comments Luther, “after pouring wine into our wound, he now pours in oil.” The Christian, conscious though he rightly is of his utter inability to stand uncondemned before the judgment throne of God, should nonetheless be filled with confidence, not in himself but in Christ; for he has a *great high priest* to stand in his place and answer for him. The concept of Jesus as our high priest is resumed from 2:17–3:1, a passage which is in close correspondence with verses 14-16 here. It is not themselves but this high priest that Christians should unceasingly consider (3:1; cf. 12:2), and for three good reasons: first because he has made propitiation for their sins (2:17; cf. 1:3); second, because he who by his own experience knows what it is to pass through the ordeal of temptation is standing by to help them win the victory in the hour of their testing (2:18); and third, because he “has passed through the heavens” and is preparing and securing for them that eternal rest which has been promised to the people of God (3:18 – 4:11; cf. Jn. 14:2f.). The knowledge of these truths should be a source of unfailing encouragement to the Christian pilgrim as he perseveres to the end; and his confidence is strengthened by the further assurance that in Jesus we have a *great* high priest – that is to say, no ordinary high priest, but the high priest *par excellence*, unique in his power and supremacy. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 169



4:16 If we would find mercy and grace when we sin, must we grovel before the throne of God? (Psalms 122, 136; Phil.4:1,4-7)

[3] [4:16] Grace is the greatest word of the Bible because more than any other it expresses the essential character of Christianity. One of the best definitions is “the love of God in active exercise on behalf of sinful men” (J.K. Mozley), and the three parts of this definition should be noted. Grace is God’s love, that is, His attitude; it is God’s love in exercise, that is, His activity; and it is God’s love exercised toward men who are sinners. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 60

5:1-3 What is true even of the priests of the Older Covenant?

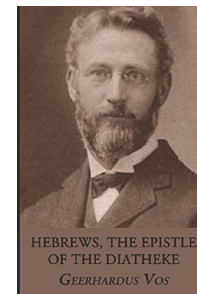
[4] It is important to distinguish between a Mediator, an Advocate, and a Priest. The Mediator reconciles God to man and man to God. The Advocate restores man after his sin. The Priest sustains man, and provides against his committing sin. The name of the Great High Priest is “Jesus, the Son of God,” the name “Jesus” referring to His humanity, suggesting nearness, oneness, and sympathy, and “Son of God” indicating His Deity, and suggesting power. ... The point is that the divine glory of Christ’s Priesthood is no barrier simply on account of His human experiences and sympathies. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 54

5:4 Why this seeming redundancy? (Jeremiah 1, esp. vv.4-10, 17-19)

B. The Perpetual Priesthood of Our Saviour [5:1-11]

5:5,6 Why these 2 particular psalm selections?

[6] The figures most commonly used to represent the foreshadowing of the New Testament in the Old are drawn from the tabernacle ordinances, such as those of priesthood and sacrifice, in chapters 9 and 13. Christ is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, however, not only as priest, but also as king. This figure is brought out in Psalm 2:7, which is quoted in Heb. 1:5 and 5:5. The same idea is brought out in 2 Sam. 7:14 which is quoted in Heb. 1:5; and Psalm 40:7-9 which is quoted in Heb. 10:5. This is taken as spoken typically of Christ. We have here a confession of sin. It is David as king-priest who is here confessing sin, professing his readiness to do by obedience what the animal sacrifices could not accomplish. There is a peculiar application of this Psalm, however. In the Psalm the true sacrifice lies in the internal sphere of obedience, not in the outward ceremony. The writer of Hebrews affirms that the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is a sacrifice of this type, being not external but internal. **Geerhardus Vos** *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews* p.60



5:7,8 Again, the paradox (and stumbling block) with Christ’s DOUBLE Sonship! (cf. the *kenosis* of Phil.2:5-11)

[7] [5:7] There is a tradition that originally the High-priest on the Day of Atonement, when he offered the prayer for forgiveness in the Holy of Holies, uttered the name

of God with a loud voice so that it could be heard far off. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.128

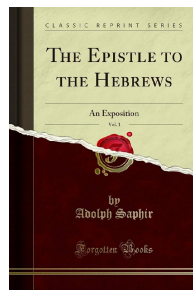
[8] The language of the first clause naturally suggests the scene in Gethsemane, and is often supposed to refer exclusively to it. But the mention of “the loud cry” recalling the “cried with a loud voice” on the Cross (Matt. 27:46,50), and “the tears,” of which we do not hear at Gethsemane, though they meet us elsewhere in the Saviour’s life (Luke 19:41; John 11:35), suggest a wider application. But whatever the exact reference of the “prayers” here spoken of the important point to notice regarding them is, that they are addressed to Him “that was able to save Him out of death,” and not “from death” ... **George Milligan** *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* p.108

[9] [5:8] ... the clause *Father, glorify thy name* expresses the sum of all the prayers of the Son, in whatever way that end was to be reached. ... True prayer – the prayer which must be answered – is the personal recognition and acceptance of the divine will (John 15:7; comp. Mark 6:24). **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.129

[10] [5:5-10] It is the most natural thing in the world for a son to learn obedience by suffering; indeed, our author makes this very point in Ch. 12:5ff. But it is not any ordinary son that he is speaking about here, but the Son of God: “Son though He was” – this is to say, Son of God though He was – even He was granted no exemption from the common law that learning comes by suffering. **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.103

5:9-11 What is implied by our High Priest’s perfection and perpetual priesthood?

[11] [5:9] Thus is Jesus the author and finisher of faith. He went before the sheep. He is the forerunner. He has experienced every difficulty, and tasted every sorrow. He knows the path in all its narrowness. Was Abraham a sojourner in the land of promise as in a strange land? Jesus, who was appointed heir of all things, had not where to lay His head. Did Moses refuse the treasures in Egypt? Jesus was offered the whole world, with all its kingdoms and glory. Did David, anointed by the Lord, experience what it is to be rejected, hated, and persecuted by the proud and ungodly? What enmity, contradiction, ingratitude had our Lord to bear! Did Jeremiah weep tears of bitter sorrow on account of Jerusalem’s impenitence and the false security of Judah, misguided by false prophets? Jesus, foreseeing still greater judgment on Israel’s apostasy, wept over the city, and loved the nation with a sorrowing and faithful heart. Jesus felt all our infirmities and sorrows, He bore our sicknesses, He sighed over the misery that is in the world through sin culminating in death, the great and last enemy; and while acknowledging divine justice His compassionate love rested on the sufferer. Jesus was all the days of His flesh a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; but in the garden of Gethsemane He entered into an experience different from His previous suffering and conflict. **Adolph Saphir** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Vol.1, p.264



Can a human priest pronounce absolution?

[5] *Note Well* – It is important to have a clear idea as to what constitutes the essential difference between a prophet and a priest. A prophet is one who represents God to man, a spokesman for God (Exod. 7:1 gives an exact illustration). A priest is one who represents man to God (as Heb. 5:1,2 shows). Everything else done by either prophet or priest was no necessary part of the office. Thus, though a priest blessed others (Num. 6:23), blessing was associated also with patriarchs, prophets (Gen. 47:10; Exod. 39:43; Deut. 33:1; Josh. 22:6), leaders and kings (2 Sam. 6:20; 1 Kings 8:14,55). But there were certain functions which only a priest could perform, as may be seen from the story of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:18). When this distinction between prophet and priest is understood, the term “priestly absolution” is at once seen to be a contradiction in terms, because (1) absolution (meaning, as it does, something coming from God to man) is the work of a prophet, and (2) the Jewish priests never absolved. The Old Testament will be searched in vain for a single instance of a priest forgiving or absolving from sin. The careful distinction between prophet and priest is thus of great service today in the face of sacerdotal claims to absolution. It also enables us to understand why Christian ministers are never called priests in the New Testament. They do not, because they cannot, represent man to God. But ministers are called prophets because they can and do represent God to man. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 65