

# Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

## Lesson 7: Powerful Prayer Through the Cross

**Key Verse:** *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.~Hebrews 5.7*

Every Saturday throughout the world a community of like-minded outdoor enthusiasts meet at a local park to participate in a 5K. Some walk, some run, some jog, some encourage from the sidelines. According to the hosts of one such event, “Parkrun is positive, welcoming, and inclusive, there is no time limit and no one finishes last. Everyone is welcome to come along.”<sup>1</sup> Parkrun participants find confidence in finishing their 5K not in perfection, but in a sympathetic and empathic community whose roles and capabilities vary. As such, all participants are confident that they will finish, and finish well! Likewise, our Savior is **Able** to carry us all the way home into His Presence, not only as our Great High Priest, but in sympathy with “our weaknesses”. He has provided us His resources that encourage us to finish well, crossing our finish line of service to Him on earth. From the Church community He has built to encourage us in accordance with differing roles and capabilities, to our ability to speak to Him directly at His throne of grace through **Prayer**, God focuses His servants on His ready mercy and grace. Thanks be to our God who hears our “loud cries and tears” in sympathy!

*I give thanks to You, Lord, for You are Good and Your steadfast love endures forever! (Psalm 118.1, 29) This is the day You have made; I am rejoicing and filled with gladness. (Psalm 118.24) You are a Great and Awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with me because I love You and I obey You. (Daniel 9.4) I am a sinner, wicked and rebellious (Daniel 9.5), yet confidently coming before Your throne of grace and mercy (Hebrews 4.16). Hallelujah! What a Savior! (John 4.25-26, 42; Revelation 19.1) As we enter the study of Your Words to us, we praise You alone, joining all God’s people in this moment in time to say: ‘Great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.’ (Psalm 117) Amen, and AMEN!*

**Hebrews 4.14-5.10** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**CH 5** 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. <sup>2</sup> He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. <sup>3</sup> Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. <sup>4</sup> And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

<sup>5</sup> 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”; <sup>6</sup> as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, <sup>10</sup> being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

### **Diamonds:**

1. As a reminder, the anchor of Paul’s message in these first chapters of Hebrews is found in Hebrews 3.6. Write out Hebrews 3.6 using two different translations (we suggest using [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) to find multiple translations such as the Amplified Bible, The Message, NIV):

<sup>1</sup> [parkrun USA](http://parkrun.com)

2. How does Paul continue to make Jesus winsome and attractive to the struggling and conflicted Christ-followers in Hebrews 4.14-5.10? In your opinion, which attribute of Christ found in Hebrews 4.14-5.10 most reinforces Paul's anchor message in Hebrews 3.6?

Paul's first warning to this hard-pressed church was not to drift away (Hebrews 2.1) followed by his clear cry for God's people not to harden their hearts (3.13). Soon Paul will tell God's people to grow up (Hebrews 5.12-14)! Paul stumbles into his third warning ("grow up") by way of his explanation of Jesus as the final and greatest High Priest, "designated by God a high priest in the order of Melchizedek" (5.10).

Melchizedek is as intriguing a figure today as he was to the readers of Paul's letter. Mentioned only twice in the Old Testament (Genesis 14 and Psalm 110), Paul sets up his deep dive about Melchizedek's priesthood in Hebrews 5. What is important to understand about him in chapter 5 is that Melchizedek held two offices before the LORD: "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14.18). This is unlike any earthly king or priest before Melchizedek, or after him. Fascinatingly, Melchizedek is again mentioned in the messianic Psalm 110. In this Psalm he is tied to the eternal and immutable (unchanging) nature of God in the LORD's declaration that His Son, Messiah, will be "a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110.4).

3. Focusing on Hebrews 5.5-9, why do you think Paul links Jesus to Melchizedek? Which attributes of Melchizedek foreshadow Jesus?

Electric Vehicles are mind-bending. The rules and process of driving remains the same. However, driving with only one pedal, or trusting that the car won't move if you take your foot off the "gas" pedal is an act of faith! Additionally, faith is stressed when the car is in "Full Self Driving" requiring only that you agree with the car's decisions about when to turn and where, allowing the car to get you to your destination safely and timely. New drivers to this model of driving are instantly filled with anxiety. Additionally, despite the truth that they have been driving for multiple decades, suddenly they are overflowing with questions about the very act of driving! After many assurances and attempts to build confidence, some abandon the car, stating that they can't drive it because it's just too different. Others embrace all that's possible and cry out in joy as they race along winding country roads at a bit over 100 mph!

Likewise, Paul's warnings are an acknowledgement of the mind-bending change of the religious practices caused by Messiah's advent, death, and resurrection. While God hasn't changed, communion with Him – through entering His Sabbath rest provided in Messiah – has created anxiety and many questions. Rather than a faith experienced through the work of sacrifices, in a radical change of religious practice, now God's people must simply believe that Jesus is the Great High Priest whose work is the final sacrifice. And just like the mind-bending nature of driving fully electric vehicles creates anxiety, questions, and celebration, so too does the mind-bending reality of no more sacrifices, no need to submit daily to an earthly high priest, no more Day of Atonement, and no more festivals; all of which has been the *only* practice these people have known as the God-established requirements for communing and worshipping with Him as well as praying to Him!

4. Read Leviticus 1.1-2 alongside Hebrews 4.14-16. Contrast how people were instructed to approach God. How radical a change was pronounced in Hebrews in comparison to Leviticus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Review your answer to Question 1 of Lesson 4 (“Peace with God through the Cross”). How different are the repeated phrases and keywords in Leviticus to the teaching of Messiah in Hebrews 4.14-5.10? (Click on this link to [Lesson 4](#) to recall, read, or complete Question 1 of Lesson 4)

**Deity: Able~** (Hebrews 5.7) The New Testament word “to be able” means essentially “to have power” (*dunamai* the verb form of that familiar Greek noun, *dunamis*). When we read that God is able to do something it means He has the *power* to do it. It is a concept related to His omnipotence. The Old Testament word has somewhat the same connotation. God is able! There is no deficiency in His power.

Scripture teaches that He is able: to save us completely (Hebrews 7.25), to keep us from sin (Hebrews 2.18; Jude 24), to help us (Hebrews 2.18), to keep that which we have committed to Him until that Day (2 Timothy 1.12), to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3.20), to supply our needs (2 Corinthians 9.8), to heal our diseases (Matthew 9.27-28), to keep us in perfect peace (Isaiah 26.3), to deliver us from death (Daniel 3.17), and to keep us from stumbling and present us blameless before God (Jude 24). Truly our God is able!!!

6. According to Hebrews 4.15, what is Jesus, the Great High Priest, the Son of God “*unable*” to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How does Paul's use of negative language (4.15) lead to the revelation of all that God is able to do? What does Paul teach us by expounding on Jesus' use of God's ableness while He was on earth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does Paul's teaching by Christ's example continue to build Paul's exhortation to “hold fast our confession” (4.14) as well as “hold fast our confidence and sense of triumph in our hope [in Christ]” (3.6, Amplified Bible)?

**Doctrine: Prayer**<sup>2</sup>~ (Hebrews 5.7) “We are able to talk to God. He speaks verbally to us in His Word and nonverbally through His obvious providence. We commune with Him through prayer...In and through prayer we express our reverence and adoration for God (Psalm 118:1-4, 24, 29); we bare our souls in contrite confession before Him (Psalm 32.5-6); we pour out the thanksgiving of grateful hearts (Philippians 4.6-7); and we offer our petitions (requests) and supplications (pleadings) to Him (Psalm 5.1-3; Romans 8.26-27).”

“In prayer we experience God as personal and powerful (Revelation 19.1). He can hear and act in response (1 John 5.14-15)...Prayer is a means God uses to bring His sovereign will to pass (Luke 11.2-4).”

“Prayer is to be addressed to God alone, either to God as Triune (three in one) or to the distinct persons of the Godhead (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit; John 16.23-24). To pray to creatures is idolatry (Matthew 6.7).”

“Proper prayer has several requisites:

1. “...we approach God with sincerity (Psalm 117). Empty and insincere phrases are a mockery to Him. Such prayer, far from being an exercise of godly religion, is an offense against God (Matthew 6.5, 7 and 21.13).”
2. “...we approach God with reverence. In prayer, we must always remember to whom we are speaking...As people pay homage to a king by entering [his] presence with a posture of respect and obeisance (adoration, worship), so we come before God in full recognition of His supreme Majesty (Matthew 6.9-13).”
3. “...we approach God in humility. Not only must we remember who He is, but we must also remember who and what we are. We are His adopted children. We are also sinful creatures. He invites us to come boldly before Him, but never arrogantly.” (Daniel 9.3-5)

“God instructs us to be earnest and fervent in our requests. At the same time, we come in willful submission. To say ‘Your will be done’ is not an indication of a lack of faith. The faith we bring to prayer must include a trust that God is able to hear our prayers and that He is disposed to answer them. Yet when God says no to our request, this faith also trusts in His wisdom (Matthew 26.36-39, 42; Mark 14.35; Luke 22.41-44). God’s wisdom and benevolence (kindness, goodness, open-handedness) must always and everywhere be assumed by those who entreat Him with petition.” (Psalm 62.8)

“We pray in the name of Jesus because we do thereby acknowledge His office as Mediator (John 17). As our High Priest, Christ is our intercessory even as the Holy Spirit is our helper in prayer (John 14.16-17, 26).”

9. You have just studied God’s commands for the high priest which includes the role of mediator in Lesson 6 (“Priests through the Cross”). There are *many* deities (attributes) of God revealed in this definition and explanation of prayer, including our current deity, Able! Which deity of God allows you “...with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...” (4.16)? Which deity of God buttresses your courage to offer up “both [specific] petitions and [urgent] supplications [for that which He needed] with fervent crying and tears to the One who was [always] able to save Him from death...” (5.7, Amplified Bible)?

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<sup>2</sup> Sproul, pp. 261-262

## Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

### **Lecture Outline:**

**Aim:** Jesus, our Great High Priest, ushers us into the fullness of God's presence.

- I. Sympathetic Priest (Hebrews 4.14-16) **TR1:** As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplished all that is needed for us to confidently come to His throne of grace.
  - a. When was the last time you drew near to God's throne of grace?
  - b. How confident are you that this privilege belongs to you?
  - c. Which current need or struggle would be best addressed at God's throne of grace?
- II. Superior Priest (Hebrews 5.1-10) **TR2:** As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplished all that is needed to gift us with countless benefits.
  - a. What benefits do you acknowledge are yours through Christ's work on the Cross?
  - b. How might a fuller understanding of the Cross and all its benefits deepen your love for God?
  - c. Which of your failings or sufferings are keeping you from fully comprehending the love letter Christ wrote for you on the Cross?

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Sproul, R.C., *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 1992)  
<https://bible.org/article/five-warnings-hebrews>