

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS 5

The apostle having made mention of Christ as an high priest, in the preceding chapter, proceeds in this to give an account of an high priest, and applies the character of him to Christ; and shows that he is of another order of priesthood than that of Aaron, even of the order of Melchisedec; of whom he could say many things, but the Hebrews were dull of hearing them; which leads him to blame them for their rudeness, and non-proficiency. The description of the high priest is taken from his relation to men, separation from them, and ordination for them; from his oblation of their gifts and sacrifices; from his sympathy with them, and from his call of God, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:1-4) all which are accommodated to Christ; as his vocation of God, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:5,6) confirmed by two testimonies out of (<sup><S01E></sup>Psalms 2:7 110:4) his being a man, and having infirmities, though sinless ones, and his sympathy with men, and compassion on them, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:7) his obedience and sufferings, and the oblation of himself, whereby he became the author of salvation to his people, which is the main thing in his priesthood, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:8,9) and which was not of the order of Aaron, though in some things there was an agreement with it, but of the order of Melchizedek, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:10) of whom the apostle could say many surprising things; but these Hebrews were dull of apprehension, and incapable of receiving them, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:11). And then he proceeds to blame them for their dulness, which he aggravates by the time they had been in the school of Christ, when it might have been expected they would have been teachers of others; by their being yet scholars, and of the lowest class, who had need to be taught the first rudiments of the Christian religion; yea, by their being as babes that stood in need of milk, and could not bear meat, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:12). And then follows a description both of babes, and of adult persons; such as are unskilful in the word of righteousness are babes, and use milk; but those who exercise their spiritual senses, to discern between good and bad doctrine, are adult, and can digest strong meat, (<sup><S01E></sup>Hebrews 5:13,14).

**Ver. 1.** *For every high priest taken from among men*, etc..] Every one that was an high priest under the law was a man, and not an angel; and it was proper he should be so, that he might be a priest for men, have compassion on them, and offer for them; and he was among the number of common men, and was taken out from them, and chosen and separated from the rest of men, as Aaron and his sons were from the children of Israel, (<sup><1281></sup>Exodus 28:1). And such an one

*is ordained for men*; in their room and stead, and for their good; and above them, as the word sometimes signifies; he was exalted unto, and invested with a superior office, to which he was ordained according to the law of a carnal commandment, by anointing with oil, and without an oath.

*In things pertaining to God*; in things in which God had to do with men; and so he presided over them in the name of God, and declared the will of God unto them, and blessed them; and in things in which men had to do with God; and so he appeared in their name, and represented their persons, and presented their sacrifices to God, as follows:

*that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins*; freewill offerings, peace offerings, burnt offerings, sin and trespass offerings, all kind of sacrifice.

**Ver. 2.** *Who can have compassion on the ignorant*, etc..] Who have committed sins of ignorance, and bring their sacrifices for them; these he does not insult and upbraid, nor break out into anger and indignation against; but pities them, and sympathizes with them; has a just measure of compassion suitable to their condition, and bears with them with great moderation and temper:

*and on them that are out of the way*; of God's commandments; who are like sheep going astray, and turn to their own way; who transgress the law of God, and err from it; perhaps such who sin knowingly and wilfully, and through infirmity, are meant:

*for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity*; not of body only, but of mind, sinful infirmity; he had much of it, it beset him all around; he was "clothed" with it, as the Syriac version renders it; as Joshua the high priest was with filthy garments, (<sup><388B></sup>Zechariah 3:3).

**Ver. 3.** *And by reason hereof*, etc..] Because of his sinful infirmity:

*he ought, as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins*; as he offered sacrifice for the sins of the people, so he was obliged to offer for his own sins; in this Christ differed from the high priest, for he had no sin of his own to offer for, (<sup><3072></sup>Hebrews 7:27) but he had, and therefore offered for them, (<sup><8613></sup>Leviticus 16:11) and made a confession of them: the form of which, as used on the day of atonement, was this;

“he put both his hands upon the bullock, and confessed, and thus he said: I beseech thee, O Lord, I have done wickedly, I have transgressed, I have sinned before thee, I and my house; I beseech thee, O Lord, pardon the iniquities, transgressions, and sins, which I have done wickedly, transgressed, and sinned before thee, I and my house.”

And this he did a second time on that day <sup>f71</sup>.

**Ver. 4.** *And no man taketh this honour to himself*, etc..] That is, the honour of the priesthood: the office of the high priest was a very honourable one; it was a peculiar honour to Aaron, and his sons, to be separated unto it; their instalment into it was very grand and solemn; at that time they were anointed with oil, and clothed with glorious garments, and sacrifices were offered for them; they had an honourable maintenance assigned them, and a large retinue of priests and Levites to attend them; great respect and reverence were shown them: but their principal honour lay in the work they performed; in representing the whole body of the people; in offering gifts and sacrifices for them; in blessing them; and in the resolution of difficult cases brought unto them; in all which they were types of Christ, the high priest. Now no man might take this honourable office upon himself, or intrude himself into it, or obtain it by any unjust method, or in any other way than by a call from God; nor did any man dare to do it, until of late, when some got into it of themselves, and were put in by the Roman governors, and even purchased it of them <sup>f72</sup>: so Joshua ben Gamla became an high priest <sup>f73</sup>; and some have thought the apostle has some respect to these wicked practices, and tacitly reproves them, as what ought not to be: for no one ought to be in this office,

*but he that is called of God, as [was Aaron]*; whose call was immediately from the Lord, and was unquestionable: Moses was ordered to separate him, and his sons, from the children of Israel, and install them into this office; they were destroyed by fire, or swallowed up by the earth, that disputed his call; and this was confirmed by a miracle, by his dry rod

budding, blooming, and bringing forth almonds: and the apostle instances in him, because his call was so remarkable and authentic; and because he was the first high priest of the Jews, and from whence the rest descended, who were lawful ones.

**Ver. 5.** *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest,* etc..] It was a glorifying of Christ, to make him an high priest; not as God, for as such no addition can be made to his glory; yea, it was a condescension in him to become a priest: but as man; it was an honour to the human nature to be united to the Son of God; and to be separated from others to this office; and to be called unto it, qualified for it, and invested with it; and to be of the order he was, and to do the work; and the very assistance he had in it, for the accomplishment of it, was a glorifying of him, for which he prayed; and the work being done, he had glory given him by his Father; and an ascription of glory is made to him by angels and saints: but Christ did not take this high and honourable office to himself, nor the glory of it; indeed, he did not receive it from man, nor was he made a priest according to the ceremonial law; yet he did not intrude himself into this office:

*but he that said unto him, thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee;* he appointed him to this office; he sent him to execute it; he anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows; he consecrated and established him in it with an oath; and prescribed to him what he should do, suffer, and offer; and declared to him what he might expect as the reward thereof. These words are taken out of (<sup><B007></sup>Psalm 2:7), (see Gill on "<sup><S005></sup>Hebrews 1:5"), and they are not to be considered as constitutive of Christ's priesthood, as if that was intended by the begetting of him as a Son; but as descriptive of the person, who called him to it, who stood in the relation of a Father to Christ, and Christ in the relation of a Son to him; therefore the one was very proper to call, and the other a very fit person to be called to this office, being every way capable of executing it, to the glory of God, and to the good of men.

**Ver. 6.** *As he saith also in another place,* etc..] Or psalm; namely, in (<sup><B004></sup>Psalm 110:4) that is, the same person, even God the Father; who spake the words before cited, also expressed the following:

*thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;* that the psalm, from whence these words are taken, belongs to the Messiah, (see Gill on "<sup><A024></sup>Matthew 22:44") and this very passage is applied unto him by the

Jewish writers <sup>f74</sup>; and had not this been the general sense of the Jewish church at this time, the apostle writing to Hebrews would not have produced it; and it very clearly expresses the priesthood of Christ, the eternity of it, and the order according to which it was; and it being not according to the order of Aaron, but of another, shows the change of the priesthood, and so of the law; of Melchizedek, (see Gill on “~~800~~ Hebrews 7:1”)

**Ver. 7.** *Who in the days of his flesh*, etc..] Or “of his humanity”, as the Arabic version renders it; or “when he was clothed with flesh”, as the Syriac version; in the time of his humiliation, when he was attended with the sinless infirmities of the flesh, or human nature; it may take in the whole course of his life on earth, especially the latter part of it: it is not to be concluded from hence, that he has not flesh now, or is not in the flesh; for it is certain that he had flesh after his resurrection; only now he is free from all the infirmities of the flesh, the pains, and sorrows, and griefs of it, which he endured when here on earth:

*when he had offered up prayers and supplications*; as he often did in many parts of his life, particularly in the garden, and upon the cross, when he offered up himself: and as the days of Christ's flesh were filled up with prayers and supplications, so should ours be also: the word for “supplications” signifies branches of olive trees, covered with wool <sup>f75</sup>; which such as sued for peace carried in their hands, and so came to signify supplications for peace: the manner in which these were offered up by Christ was

*with strong crying and tears*; with a most vehement outcry, with a loud voice, as when on the cross; and though there is no mention of his tears at that time, or when in the garden, no doubt but he shed them: all that Christ did, and said, are not written; some things were received by tradition, and by inspiration; Christ wept at other times, and why not at these? and there are some circumstances in his prayers which intimate as much, (~~1058~~ Matthew 26:38 27:46 ~~1224~~ Luke 22:44) which shows the weight of sin, of sorrow, and of punishment, that lay upon him, and the weakness of the human nature, considered in itself: and it may be observed to our comfort, that as Christ's crying and tears were confined to the days of his flesh, or to the time of his life here on earth, so shall ours be also. Mention is made of **twqzj twl pt**, “strong prayers” <sup>f76</sup>, in Jewish writings. The person to whom Christ offered his prayers is described in the following words,

*unto him that was able to save him from death*; from a corporeal death, as he could, but that it was otherwise determined; or rather to raise him from the dead, to deliver him from the state of the dead, from the power of death, and the grave, as he did; and so the Syriac version renders it, “to quicken him from death”; to restore him from death to life:

*and was heard in that he feared*; or “by fear”; by God, who was the object of his fear, and who is called the fear of Isaac, (<sup>GEN 31:42</sup>) he was always heard by him, and so he was in the garden, and on the cross; and was carried through his sufferings, and was delivered from the fear of death, and was saved from the dominion and power of it, being raised from the dead by his Father: or “he was heard because of his fear”, or “reverence”; either because of the dignity and reverence of his person, in which he was had by God; or because of his reverence of his Father.

**Ver. 8.** *Though he were a Son*, etc..] The Son of God, as the Vulgate Latin version reads; not by creation, nor by adoption, nor by office, but by nature, being the only begotten of the Father, having the same nature and perfections with him:

*yet learned he obedience*; not to his parents, or civil magistrates, though that is true; nor merely to the precepts of the law, which he did; but unto death: through sufferings he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: and this he learnt; not that he was ignorant of the nature of it; nor was he destitute of an obedient disposition to it; but the meaning is, he had an experience of it, and effected it; and which was voluntary, and done in our room and stead; and is the rule and the measure of our righteousness before God: and this he learned,

*by the things which he suffered*; from men, from devils, and from the justice of God. Christ's sonship did not exempt him from obedience and sufferings; this shows the dignity of Christ's person, that he is the Son of God, not as Mediator, for as such he is a servant; and it would be no wonder that he should learn obedience as a servant; and this shows also the great humility and condescension of Christ in obeying and suffering for us; though so great a person; and likewise the vile nature of sin, and the strictness of divine justice: and we may learn from hence, not to expect to be exempted from sufferings on account of sonship; nor to conclude we are not sons, because we suffer; and that afflictions are instructive, and by them experience is learned.

**Ver. 9.** *And being made perfect*, etc..] In his obedience, through sufferings; having completed his obedience, gone through his sufferings, and finished his sacrifice, and being perfectly glorified in heaven:

*he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*; the salvation Christ is the author of is “eternal”; it was resolved upon from eternity, and contrived in it; it was secured in the everlasting covenant, in which not only a Saviour was provided, but blessings both of grace and glory: and it is to eternity; and stands distinguished from a temporal salvation, and is opposed to eternal damnation; it is the salvation of the soul, which is immortal; and it takes in both grace and glory, which are of a durable nature; and the continuance of it is owing to the abiding and lasting virtue of Christ's person, blood, and righteousness: and Christ is the cause or author of this salvation, by his obedience and sufferings; by obeying the precept, and bearing the penalty of the law; by the price of his blood, and by the power of his arm; by his death and by his life; by his sacrifice on the cross, and by his intercession in heaven; by bestowing grace here, and glory hereafter: this shows that salvation is done, and that Christ is the sole author of it, and that all the glory of it should be given to him; and those to whom he is the author of salvation, are such as hearken to the voice of his Gospel, and obey him in his ordinances. Christ is not the author of salvation to all men; all men do not obey him; all those whom Christ saves, he brings them to an obedience to himself; for his obedience for them does not exempt them from obedience to him, though their obedience is no cause of their salvation; Christ himself is the alone author of that.

**Ver. 10.** *Called of God an high priest, after the order of Melchisedec.*] *ytrbd* I [ , according to what is said of him, (<sup>3806</sup>Psalm 110:4) there is a resemblance between Melchizedek and Christ; many things that are said of the one, agree with the other: there is a likeness in Melchizedek to Christ; in his person, and what is said of him, that he was without father and mother; and in his office as a priest, and in the manner of his instalment into it; and in the antiquity, dignity, and perpetuity of it: and this is repeated for the further confirmation of Christ's priesthood, and is a conclusion of the truth of it from sufficient evidence: this does not so much design the constitution of Christ as priest, nor the call of him to that office, as the denomination or surnaming of him a priest of Melchizedek's order, because of the agreement between them; and contains a reason of Christ's being the author of eternal salvation, because he is a priest for ever; and

prevents any objections against Christ's priesthood, and opens a way to discourse more largely concerning it.

**Ver. 11.** *Of whom we have many things to say*, etc..] Either of Melchizedek, or of Christ, or of his priesthood or of all of these; since the apostle does largely treat of them in the following chapters: he says many things concerning Melchizedek in the seventh chapter, and many things of Christ, and his priesthood, in those that follow; Christ is a large and inexhaustible subject in the Gospel ministry, and what a Gospel minister delights to dwell on; and it is a fund and stock from whence he is furnished with things of the greatest usefulness, and of the utmost importance:

*and hard to be uttered*; as were many things respecting Melchizedek, mentioned in (<sup>scilicet</sup> Hebrews 7:3) and also concerning Christ, and his priesthood: abstruse and difficult things are to be looked into, considered, searched after, and insisted on: the whole Scripture is profitable, and the whole counsel of God is to be declared, and things hard to be explained should be attempted; this is the way to an increase of light and knowledge; though it becomes ministers to consult their own abilities, and the capacity of their hearers, that they do not go beyond them:

*seeing ye are dull of hearing*; this dulness of hearing is thought by some to arise from their afflictions; or from their attachment to the law of Moses; or rather from their sluggishness, indocility, and want of industry; and often times this arises from pride and prejudice, and irreverence of the word of God; and frequently from the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life.

**Ver. 12.** *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers*, etc..] These Hebrews had had great advantages; they were not only descended from Abraham, and had the law of Moses, and the writings of the Old Testament, but some of them had enjoyed the ministry of Christ, and however of his apostles; and it was now about thirty years from the day of Pentecost, in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed in such an extraordinary manner, and a large number were converted, and a church state settled among them; and therefore considering the length of time, the opportunities and advantages they had enjoyed, it might have been expected, and indeed it is what should have been, that they would have been teachers of others, some in a private, and some in a public way: from whence it may be observed, that to have time for learning, and yet make no proficiency, is an aggravation of dulness; moreover, that men ought to be



hearers, and make some good proficiency in hearing, before they are fit to be teachers of others; also, that persons are not only to hear for their own edification, but for the instruction of others, though all hearers are not designed for public teachers; for to be teachers of others, requires a considerable share of knowledge: to which may be added, that the churches of Christ are the proper seminaries of Gospel ministers. But this was so far from being the case of these Hebrews, that the apostle says of them,

*ye have need that one teach on again which be the first principles of the oracles of God*; by the oracles of God are meant the Scriptures, not the law of Moses only, but all the writings of the Old Testament, which were given by the respiration of God, and are authoritative and infallible; and by the “first principles” of them are intended, either the first promises in them, concerning the Messiah; or the institutions, rites, and ceremonies of the law, which are sometimes called στοιχεια, elements, (Galatians 4:3,9) where the same word is used as here; and which were the alphabet and rudiments of the Gospel to the Jews: or else the apostle designs the plain doctrines of the Gospel, which were at first preached unto them, in which they needed to be again instructed, as they were at first; so that instead of going forward, they had rather gone back:

*and are become such as have need of milk*; of the types, shadows, and figures of the law, which were suited to the infant state of the church, who by sensible objects were directed to the view of Gospel grace; or of the plain and easier parts of the Gospel, comparable to milk for their purity, sweetness, nourishing nature, and being easy of digestion:

*and not of strong meat*: such as the deep things of God, the mysteries of the Gospel; those which are more hard to be understood, received, and digested; such as the doctrines of the Trinity, of God's everlasting love, of eternal election and reprobation, of the person of Christ, the abrogation of the law, etc..

**Ver. 13.** *For everyone that useth milk*, etc..] And sits down contented with the first principles of the Gospel, such as are easily taken in and digested; or makes use of the ceremonial law, as a schoolmaster to teach him the Gospel:

*is unskilful in the word of righteousness*; the Gospel, which is a doctrine of righteousness; not of works of righteousness done by men, and of justification by them, or of a man's own righteousness; but of the pure,

perfect, and everlasting righteousness of Christ: and it is called so, because it is the means of stripping a man of his own righteousness; and of revealing the righteousness of Christ unto him; and of working faith in him to lay hold upon it; and of discovering the agreement there is between the righteousness of Christ, and the justice of God; and of teaching men to live soberly, righteously, and godly: and such are unskilful in it, who either have no knowledge of the doctrine of justification; of the matter of it, Christ's righteousness; of the form of it, by imputation; and of the date of it, before faith: or have a very confused notion of it, joining their own works with Christ's righteousness, for justification, as many judaizing professors did; or who, if they have a notional knowledge of it, have no practical concern in it; do not believe with the heart unto righteousness; have not the experience, sweetness, and power of this doctrine upon them; and do not live lives agreeable to it:

*for he is a babe.* This word is used sometimes by way of commendation, and is expressive of some good characters of the saints; such as harmlessness and inoffensiveness, humility, and meekness, a desire after the sincere milk of the word, freedom from rancour and malice, hypocrisy and guile; but here it is used by way of reproach, and denotes levity and inconstancy, ignorance and non-proficiency, want of digestion of strong meat, and incapacity to take care of themselves, as standing in need of tutors and governors.

**Ver. 14.** *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,* etc.] Or perfect; (see <sup>406</sup>1 Corinthians 2:6). This does not intend a perfection of justification; for though some have a greater degree of faith than others, and a clearer discovery of their justification, yet babes in Christ are as perfectly justified as more grown and experienced believers; nor a perfection of sanctification, for there is no perfection of holiness but in Christ; and though the work of sanctification may be in greater perfection in one saint than in another, yet all are imperfect in this life; and as to a perfection of parts, babes have this as well as adult persons: but it designs a perfection of knowledge; for though none are entirely perfect, yet some have arrived to a greater degree of the knowledge of Gospel mysteries than others, and to these the strong meat of the Gospel belongs; they are capable of understanding the more mysterious parts of the Gospel; of searching into the deep things of God; and of receiving and digesting the more sublime truths of the Christian religion:

*even those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*; that is, their spiritual senses, the internal senses of the understanding and judgment, signified by external ones; as by seeing the Son; hearing the voice of Christ; savouring or smelling a sweet odour in the things of God, and Christ; tasting that the Lord is gracious; feeling and handling the word of life, as these are held forth in the everlasting Gospel: and these being exercised on their proper object, by use, an habit is contracted; and such are qualified for discerning, as between moral good and evil, and the worse and better state of the church, and between law and Gospel, so between the doctrines of Christ, and the doctrines of men; who find they differ: the doctrines of Christ such experienced persons find to be good, wholesome, nourishing, and salutary; and the doctrines of men to be evil, to eat, as does a canker, and to be pernicious, poisonous, and damnable; and the discernment they make, and the judgment they form, are not according to the dictates of carnal reason, but according to the Scriptures of truth, and their own experience.