

Dr. David A. deSilva, Hebrews, Session 5, Hebrews 4:14-5:10: A Great High Priest, 6-min. Video Overview

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Alright, so today we're going to dig into this really powerful, kind of game-changing idea from the book of Hebrews. Now I know it's an ancient text, right? But it tackles a problem that feels incredibly modern, that feeling we all get sometimes, that we just don't measure up. So the author of Hebrews basically tees up this very question.

I mean, think about it. Imagine you're standing in front of something just immense and powerful, and you feel totally exposed. It's a recipe for fear, right? But then what if, and this is the big switch.

What if that exact same situation could actually fill you with complete and total confidence? That's the wild pivot this text is about to make, and honestly, it's a huge one. And what's crazy is the text does this, like, right away. First, you get this image that's designed to make you a little nervous, right? God's word is this sharp sword that sees everything.

Nothing is hidden. Yeah, pretty intimidating. But then, bam! In the very next breath, the script is totally flipped.

Suddenly, we're told we can walk right up to God's throne, not with fear, but with boldness, and expect to find mercy and help. So you have to ask, what gives? What on earth happened in between those two sentences to make that shift from pure terror to total confidence possible? Well, to really get it, you've got to understand who this was originally written for. I mean, these folks were not living the high life.

Choosing to be part of this new Christian movement had cost them big time. We're talking socially, economically. They were being pushed to the very margins of society.

They were losing their reputation, their stuff, and maybe, just maybe, they were starting to lose hope. They desperately needed a reason to hang on when everything and everyone was screaming at them to just quit. And the author gives them a reason.

It's a pretty radical one, actually. And it all revolves around this single, massive idea. A completely new kind of high priest.

Okay, so you might be asking, what exactly is a high priest? The best way to think about it is like a spiritual broker. In the ancient world, this job was absolutely crucial. This was the person who stood in the gap between regular people and God.

They were the go-between, the one who helped secure divine benefits, and really importantly, dealt with all the stuff that gets in the way, like sin. They were your one point of access. And right here is where the author drops an absolute bombshell.

He basically says, hey, guess what? We have one. We have a great high priest. And then he names him, Jesus, the Son of God.

Now, you've got to understand, this wasn't some abstract theological idea for them. This was presented as a hard fact, a concrete reality that was meant to change everything for this community that was feeling so beat down. So what makes this new priest so special? Well, he comes with some seriously unique benefits.

First off, he's not just another guy. He's the Son of God. That means you've got unparalleled access.

Second, his location is key. He's crossed through the heavens, which basically means he set up shop right next to the divine source of all favor. And third, this connects you to something eternal, something that lasts, not this shaky, temporary world that's letting you down.

I mean, talk about a massive upgrade. Okay, but for this to land, for anyone to actually buy it, this new priest has to have the right qualifications, right? So the author basically lays out his resume, and he focuses on two key things that make Jesus the perfect person for the job: his sympathy and his status. Alright, let's talk sympathy first.

Your average human priest can sympathize with you because, hey, he's flawed too. He gets weakness because he struggles with it himself. But Jesus' sympathy, the author argues, comes from a totally different source.

See, he was tested in every single way that we are, but, and this is the key, he never sinned. So he doesn't know our weakness from the perspective of failing. He knows it from the perspective of perfectly overcoming it.

He gets the struggle on a deep, intimate level, but he was never dragged down by it. And then there's his status, which is also a huge deal. A human high priest, under the old system, had to deal with his own sin first.

He had to offer sacrifices for himself before he could even start helping anyone else. He was a flawed mediator for flawed people. But Jesus? Since he was without sin, there was no barrier.

He didn't need to clear his own name first. And that, right there, makes him a perfect, totally unhindered go-between. Okay, so the resume is looking pretty solid.

But there's still one major hurdle. Legitimacy. I mean, you can't just wake up one day and declare, hey everyone, I'm the high priest.

The author knows this is a potential objection. He points out that nobody gets to just take this honor for themselves. You have to be called by God, just like Aaron, the very first high priest, was.

So the million-dollar question is, was Jesus actually appointed? The author's answer is a huge, resounding yes, and he brings the receipts, pulling directly from Scripture. He

connects the dots between two really important passages in the Psalms. First from Psalm 2, where God says, "You are my son."

Then the real clincher, from Psalm 110, where God declares to that same son, you are a priest forever. For the author of Hebrews, this is it. This is the divine appointment.

The official confirmation from God himself that makes Jesus' priesthood legit. So let's recap. He's sympathetic, he's sinless, and he's officially appointed.

That should be enough, right? But the author adds one last qualification, and this one is pretty shocking. It's something that wasn't forged up in heaven, but right here on earth. It was forged in suffering.

The author walks us through this really intense process. So first, during his life on earth, Jesus is praying these raw, passionate prayers with loud cries and tears. Then, through suffering, the text says he learned obedience, which was a pretty common idea back then: that you learn best through what you endure.

After that, he was perfected, and because of all that, he became the source of salvation. It's laid out like a journey, and suffering is a non-negotiable part of that journey. Now that word perfected can really trip us up.

So let's clarify. The original Greek word here, teleotheis, isn't about fixing flaws or debugging code. Remember, the whole point is that Jesus didn't have any flaws to fix.

Instead, it means being brought to completion, reaching the intended goal or telos. So his journey to the heavenly realm, his ascension, that was the completion. That was the final step that fully qualified him for the job.

So here's the bottom line, the really crucial point. His suffering wasn't a bug. It was a feature.

It wasn't a sign of weakness or that the plan was going wrong. No, according to the author of Hebrews, it was the final, absolutely essential part of his training. It was the one experience that fully and completely equipped him to be the high priest these people so desperately needed.

So what did all of this mean for that original audience, the ones who were struggling so much? Well, it was nothing short of a complete and total reframe of their entire reality. Think about how powerful this must have been for them. In their day-to-day lives, their social reality, they were being shoved aside, treated like outsiders.

But this teaching gave them a whole new lens to see through, a cosmic reality. And in that reality, they weren't on the margins at all. They were actually at the very center of the universe with a direct line to the throne of God.

So it looked like a demotion to their neighbors was actually the ultimate promotion. And that whole reframe leads to this just incredible invitation. The author says, therefore, you know, because of everything we just talked about, because you have this perfect, sympathetic, divinely appointed high priest.

The takeaway isn't to be timid; it's the opposite. Don't shrink back; draw near and do it with boldness. Approach God's throne like it's a throne of favor, not a throne of judgment.

You can see how this one idea really did change the whole picture for them. Just hanging on, you know, persevering when life got hard, wasn't just some grim chore anymore. It became the most logical, rational thing you could possibly do.

I mean, think about it. Why on earth would you give up when you have a perfect representative sitting at the control center of the universe, making sure you have a direct line to all the mercy and help you could ever need to get through? And that really leaves us with a big question to think about, doesn't it? The text is adamant that we have confident access to a throne of favor. That's a place where help isn't something you earn by being good enough, but something you receive freely because of this perfect mediator.

So the question for us is what actually changes in our lives, in our struggles, when we stop trying to earn help and start seeing it as something we can just boldly walk up and receive?