

HEBREWS: REPLACING MAN'S RITUALISM WITH CHRIST
"Part VII: Trusting Christ's Help In Praying For Our WEAKNESSES"
(Hebrews 5:1-10)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

When attending Bible School, a Christian worked at the men's dorm as a barber, cutting our hair for a great price. He did it in part as a ministry, using his skill for God and also encouraging us as we prepared to serve the Lord one day.

One day we got to talking about how he came to faith in Christ, a testimony that moved me deeply.

This barber grew up in a parochial boarding school that was run very strictly by nuns and priests as many such institutions were run in those days. Being rather mischievous, he was always being scolded, having his hands slapped or back end spanked, and he grew over the years to resent it. He felt he was just being picked on by the nuns and priests.

One day, as he played near a water fountain, one of the nuns came up behind him and started scolding him in a rather fierce way. This man, then about twelve years old, became so angry, that all the years of "taking" the scolding from this nun welled up in him and he exploded, punching her in the mouth and knocking out some of her front teeth!

Seeing this lady of the cloth with her bloodied mouth before him, and suddenly feeling awful about what he had done, this young man plunged the nun's head down into the fountain's water to cool off her mouth and stop the bleeding. However, his action apparently wasn't taken as a help, but was seen as further aggression.

He was soundly whipped by two priests at once, and sent to an archbishop for confession as his overseers felt that a mere priest or bishop could not absolve him for his sins in their confessionals!

This man spent years wondering if he could ever be truly forgiven by God! He hadn't planned to hit the nun in the mouth, but his **weakness** at feeling he had been *picked on* for ten years just couldn't resist the temptation to explode against her once she scolded him so directly and painfully that day by the fountain!

Well, can God forgive such a deed? Can Jesus who is said to intercede for our sins WANT to pray and do so EFFECTIVELY if He HIMSELF was PERFECT? HOW?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Though our studies in Hebrews so far show Jesus as our QUALIFIED High Priest Who EMPATHIZES with us, I yet wonder how WELL He can DO just that since HE'S PERFECT, and I'm NOT! How can JESUS identify with ME in my FAILINGS?!"

- I. **God arranged for Israel's Old Testament High Priest to be able to identify to the MAXIMUM with the FAILINGS of the people of God he represented in prayer to Him, Hebrews 5:1-4:**
 - A. God arranged for Israel's high priests to be selected from among the people so that they would suitably represent the people to God, 5:1a.
 - B. This representation covered everything in a mortal's needs of relating to God, for the priest offered holy gifts of holy men as well as made sacrifices for the sins of unholy men, Hebrews 5:1b.
 - C. Thus, the high priest is capable of representing the people of God with **gentleness** as he **identifies himself** with their human failings:
 1. The writer of Hebrews noted that the high priest who represented his colleagues could deal gently with the ignorant and sinful, 5:2a.
 2. He could do so because he himself suffered from spiritual ignorance and going astray from the Lord's ways, for he himself was subject to **WEAKNESSES** as a mortal, Hebrews 5:2b.
 3. Proof of this **WEAKNESS** is noted by recalling that the Mosaic Law provided for the High Priest to offer sacrifices for **his OWN** sins **besides** those of the people, Hebrews 5:3 with Leviticus 4:3.
 - D. Also, as the high priest was **sinful**, even the selection of **who** would serve in this office was chosen by **GOD** to insure that the priest who served had no sinful, selfish agenda for gaining the office, Hebrews 5:4; cf. B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 120-121.
- II. **Drawing from this analogy, the author of Hebrews shows how FULLY Jesus identified with all the WEAKNESSES of fallen man, YET without HIMSELF being a SINNER, Hebrews 5:5-10:**
 - A. First of all, showing Christ to be completely unselfish, the writer of Hebrews notes that Jesus did **not** choose **Himself** to be a spiritual high priest, but God the **Father** did that, Hebrews 5:5 (quoting Psalm. 2:7).
 - B. In fact, Jesus was **so** selfless that God made Him an **eternal** high priest after the order of Melchisedec to whom even Israel's chief patriarch, Abraham paid tithes, Heb. 5:6, 10 with Ps. 110:4; Gen. 14:18-20.
 - C. Furthermore, **while being totally sinless**, Jesus **completely** identified with fallen man's **weaknesses** in His massive sufferings, Heb. 5:7-9:

1. While on the earth in His unglorified body, Jesus prayed to the Father for help with loud cries and tears in the desire to be delivered from the cross. This experience was unimagably severe in terms of the spiritual realm, not to mention the physical, mental and emotional suffering, Hebrews 5:7; Mtt. 26:36-38; 27:46.
 2. In this experience, though sinless, Jesus' **humanity** had to **learn to obey** the Father to face the overwhelming cross even though everything **human** within Him **dreaded** it, Heb. 5:8; Matt. 26:39.
- D. In facing the Father's will **regardless** of His humanity's opposition to doing so, Jesus **humanly MATURED** so that **while** facing the cross, He produced gracious eternal salvation for all who obey His call of faith for salvation from sin, Hebrews 5:9 with John 3:16.
- E. Hence, Jesus Christ experienced to the **greatest degree human weakness**, yet without sin. That equipped Him to understand human **weakness** behind our **failings** better than any other being possibly can.

Application: *Though He did not sin, Jesus SUFFERED more through the bane of human WEAKNESS than any other human could do so that He is FULLY able to empathize with us who SIN or are IGNORANT due to our human WEAKNESSES! So, to have peace with God, (1) believe on Jesus' atonement on the cross and receive God's forgiveness and gift of eternal life, John 3:16. (2) As a believer, (a) IF we SIN, confess it to God and He will cleanse us through the account of Christ's cross, 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2. (b) If we are TEMPTED to sin due to WEAKNESS in facing hard things in life, or if we SUFFER and feel dragged down to be tempted to sin BECAUSE of our human weaknesses, PRAY to God for help; Jesus will intercede for us along with the Holy Spirit with an intercession too great for human words to utter, Romans 8:26 NIV. (3) If we are moved with appreciation for how WELL Jesus has qualified the HARD WAY to empathize with our WEAKNESSES, simply TELL Him this in prayer, and worship Him with expressions of thanksgiving, Rev. 5:8-14!*

Lesson: *As signified by His being chosen by God for an ETERNAL office of high priesthood, and as proved by His having plumbed the depths of what human FRAILITY like no other human could do, none but JESUS can understand man's FAILINGS and intercede for them to God!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon's lesson . . .)

Following Connie's surgery on April 8th last month, though she started to show initial signs of improvement, within a few days from her release from the hospital, things turned suddenly bad. She felt like her head was peeling like an orange as the muscles in the skull went into convulsion. Her head muscles were reacting to the tight surgical stitches due to her fibromyalgia, but we didn't know it at the time.

Dr. Rowe had previously told us to call his "beeper" in case of an emergency. Well, thinking that you **spoke** on the phone into the beeper, Nadine and I intermittently called his beeper, and poured out our concerns about Connie into the doctor's beeper. It was to no avail!

We tried calling the Doctor's office for help, and the secretary who was new to the job there merely left a note for Dr. Rowe to read the next afternoon when he came into his clinic office!

Nadine and I were privately praying for direction and an answer to what seemed another long "waiting game" medical procedure! All the while, Connie was in pain and having repeated focal seizures!

Suddenly, though lying in great discomfort, it was **Connie** who came up with the idea that maybe we weren't supposed to **talk** into beeper, but **dial** our **phone number** into it! Maybe Dr. Rowe had a digital read-out on his beeper and would then know who to call back!

Nadine decided to try that, and within a few minutes, Dr. Rowe had returned our call. He was able to direct us to the Pediatric Emergency Center at John's Hopkins, and called that facility ahead of our arrival to get us immediate attention. The next day, Dr. Rowe removed Connie's stitches that he recognized were causing her fibromyalgia to act up, setting off her symptoms. As soon as the stitches were out, the seizures stopped much to our relief!

Later, in explaining to the doctor why we hadn't obtained him earlier, we had to report that we had not KNOWN just HOW beepers WORKED! What everyone else in the country seemed to know all the way from doctors down to dope dealers, we DID NOT know, and that IGNORANCE was frustrating and embarrassing!

Nevertheless, in answer to prayer, God had enabled us to get help! Jesus UNDERSTANDS our WEAKNESSES, and we can come to Him in prayer and find His HELP over these weaknesses!