

Fact Sheet for **“Help!”**
Hebrews 4:14-5:3

Pastor Bob Singer
03/12/2017

Let's review what we have already seen in this book.

1. This book was written to the “Hebrews” who had followed Christ, to encourage them to maintain this course. There was a favored group of Jews who were referred to as “Hebrews” (Acts 6:1). The Hellenists were Jews (whether by birth or proselytes) who spoke only Greek and no Semitic language. The Hebrews spoke a Semitic language in addition to Greek. According to the Talmud, Pharisaism made little secret of its contempt for Hellenists.¹ The Hebrews then were viewed as the cream of the crop of Jewish society.
2. Jesus is God's Son... greater than the prophets, greater than the angels, and greater even than Moses.
3. Through His death He made a once-for-all complete payment for sins.
4. Those who follow Him can “rest” from trying to be acceptable to God through the Mosaic Law of works. His message is that salvation is by grace through faith.

In 4:14 the author of this book now picks-up an idea he introduced 2:14-18.

^{4:14} ¶ **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.**

The words **“who has passed through the heavens”** brings to mind the words of Acts 1:9-11. And notice the encouragement at the end of this verse, **“let us hold fast our confession”**.

The author of this book refers to Jesus as **“a great high priest”**. He has a particular section of the Mosaic Law in mind... Leviticus 16.

¹⁵ **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.** ¹⁶ **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.**

^{5:1} ¶ **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.** ² **He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.** ³ **Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.**

One role of the Jewish high-priest comes from Leviticus 16. Yom Kippur (late September to early October) is the Day of Atonement, Covering, or Forgiveness. On only this day, once a year, is the high priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. On that day two goats are chosen. One is offered as a sin offering. The other is the scapegoat bearing all the sins of the people of Israel. But before going behind the veil the high priest makes an offering for his own sin first.

Jesus is our high priest, but He had no sin. Jesus took on human form and was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin. But His humanity allows Him to

¹ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 9, p. 329.

sympathize with our weaknesses. He felt temptation like we do, even though he had no sin nature. He consistently chose what was right, unlike Adam and Eve. Now look at verses 15 and 16 again.

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

We can confidently draw to the throne of grace in prayer, knowing that our sins have been completely paid for.

We can draw near to receive mercy.

Think about Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42). She very definitely was receiving mercy. In fact think of all of us who come to Christ. We all need and receive mercy.

But also think of a verse from 1 John 1:9. If you look at the context of 1 John 1 this verse is primarily directed to Christians. There are two kinds of forgiveness. The first comes when we initially respond to God's gracious offer of salvation through faith in Christ. We receive the Holy Spirit as God's down payment of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14). We are transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13). We are freed from slavery to sin (Romans 6:5-7). We are given a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's Word through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). But 1 John 1:9 refers to a different kind of forgiveness. We need this forgiveness when we walk away from fellowship with the author of our salvation by sinning, and need the restoration of fellowship.

On Yom Kippur the high priest *fearfully* came behind the veil to the mercy seat. But we can draw near with confidence to the throne of grace for salvation or this restoration of fellowship with God, knowing that Jesus has paid for our sins in full, and knowing that He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.

We draw near to find help in time of need.

This is different than sinning then asking for forgiveness, sinning then asking for forgiveness. This is asking for help before sinning. We can with confidence draw near to the throne of grace to find help in the time of need. Much of what we need is God's help to stand firm in the face of temptation. This may come from a quick habit pattern to respond wrongly... all the way to an intense temptation that we are struggling with.

Hebrews 4:15-16 then become two verses that should be high on our list to remember. Think about these two verses the next time you are in need of either mercy or help in the face of temptation.