

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrews 05:01-04

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Hebrews Chapter 5, and today we will read verses 1-4.

We, as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, not only need the apostolic ministry of Jesus Christ—who was sent by God to accomplish redemption for us, lead us out of Egypt, cross the Red Sea, journey through the wilderness, and cross the Jordan River to enter the good land. The events experienced by Moses and Joshua have also become, in the New Testament, the experiences we undergo as we follow Jesus Christ. Ultimately, we can all settle into the church life.

However, this is not enough. We also need the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ to bring us to the throne of grace, where we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Through the apostolic ministry of Jesus Christ, we gain our objective status and position. Yet, we also need to experience His high priestly ministry so that we may become holy and consecrated to God, thereby entering into true rest.

As the author of Hebrews begins to introduce the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, he first brings us to the heavenly Holy of Holies, where Jesus Christ is ministering today. He wants us to know this High Priest, who has passed through the heavens and is full of majesty and glory. Moreover, he points out that Jesus has opened a way to the heavenly throne of grace so that we can seek His help and supply at any time.

The main burden of the author of Hebrews is to help the Hebrew believers around him understand that this High Priest in heaven is far superior to the Aaronic priesthood they were familiar with. At the end of chapter 4, the author introduces this topic, and in Hebrews 5:1-4, he turns back to the Aaronic priesthood known to the Hebrew believers, listing the qualifications required of a high priest. This

prepares the way for verses 5-10, which prove that Jesus Christ's high priestly ministry surpasses that of Aaron.

For New Testament believers, Peter also tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 that every New Testament believer is a royal priest. Therefore, in learning to serve, we must understand these qualifications. This helps us become qualified priests and properly fulfill our duties. From today's passage, Hebrews 5:1-4, we can summarize seven qualifications that a high priest must have. As we describe these qualifications, we will also examine how Jesus Christ meets and exceeds them. These qualifications also serve as a great reminder to New Testament saints who are willing to serve: we must possess these qualifications to serve as New Testament priests who minister to others.

Verse 1: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

The second half of this verse, according to the Chinese Union Version, provides a more accurate translation: "to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." Since our ancestor Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, humanity has turned away from God, and sin has created a barrier between man and God. Man cannot approach God. Originally, man was created in God's image and likeness to rule over all creation for God. This was the lofty status and position God gave man. However, because of sin, man fell into a state where he could not come before God.

In eternity, God had already planned redemption. Before His Son was incarnated, God established the priesthood and the ordinances of priestly service among His Old Testament people, the Israelites. These details are recorded in Leviticus. Those who follow daily Bible readings may recall that last year we spent much time in Leviticus. In the priestly system, the high priest became the mediator between God and man, allowing people to come before God and restore fellowship with Him. This verse outlines three qualifications of a high priest.

The First Qualification: Chosen from among men. A high priest must be a person, possessing human life, nature, and experiences, to minister among people. Angels are not human; they lack physical bodies and therefore cannot serve as high priests. For the Son of God to become our High Priest, He had to take on flesh, as Hebrews 2:14 says: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same." He came to earth and lived among men, fulfilling the first qualification. As New Testament believers, if we are to fulfill our priestly role, the first condition is to have a pleasant humanity that draws people to us, allowing them to accept our ministry.

The Second Qualification: Mediator between God and man. The high priest is appointed for men in things pertaining to God. He stands between God and men, as a mediator. On one hand, he is sent by God to handle matters for men; on the other hand, these matters pertain to God and aim to bring people into God's favor. Someone sent by God must understand His will, provide abundant supply to meet people's needs, and then help people turn to God.

Jesus Christ, sent by God, took on human form and lived among people. John 1:14 describes it: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus first used grace to meet people's needs and then supplied truth to help them know God, turn to Him, and be reconciled to Him. Similarly, when we serve as priests to minister to others, we must stand between God and people, receiving supply from God and letting His grace flow through us to meet the needs of others.

A mediator is not just someone who passively relays information, as the value of mere transmission is limited—especially in today's world where social media inundates us with forwarded messages. Such mass sharing often overwhelms rather than edifies. A mediator must first experience God's grace personally and transform this experience into testimony. This subjective testimony, born from internal change and influence, can genuinely help others turn to God through your ministry.

The Third Qualification: Appointed to offer sacrifices. Because sin separates man from God, anyone who wishes to turn to God must first address the issue of sin.

Before the completion of God's redemptive plan, people relied on the blood of sacrificial animals to temporarily cover their sins and fragrant offerings to find favor with God. Priests were tasked with offering these gifts and sacrifices on behalf of others, thus restoring their fellowship with God.

In Leviticus, there are clear instructions on voluntary gifts and sin offerings. Offerings not made according to God's regulations would not be accepted. Therefore, Old Testament priests had to study these ordinances to properly offer sacrifices for others. As our High Priest, Jesus Christ did not offer animal sacrifices or grain offerings mixed with oil. Instead, He offered Himself.

In the Old Testament, animals were offered as sacrifices, but these sacrifices could not remove sin, only cover it. Therefore, sacrifices needed to be continually offered. However, Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice, once and for all, eliminating the debt of sin forever. He is truly able to take away our sin. The humanity of Jesus Christ, gentle and pure, is more acceptable to God than the grain offering mixed with oil. It is through the offering and sacrifice of the great high priest, Jesus Christ, that we can come before God.

As we learn the priestly service, we should follow the example of Jesus Christ, offering our own bodies as living sacrifices, which is the service that pleases God. Furthermore, we should encourage the saints whom we serve to offer themselves as well, so that together we may testify that we are all accepted by God in Jesus Christ.

Verse 2: "He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since He Himself is also subject to weakness."

The previous verse focuses on the high priest's role as a mediator between man and God, bringing people to God according to His will. This verse highlights the relationship between the high priest and people, especially his ability to empathize with others. The high priest is there to serve people, so he cannot be distant or aloof; he must come among the people.

The fourth qualification: it's the ability to have compassion on the ignorant and those who go astray. "Ignorant" refers to those who sin out of ignorance and offend God; "going astray" refers to those who follow their own paths, departing from the truth and losing their way. A qualified high priest can empathize with such people, coming alongside the ignorant and lost to comfort, support, encourage, and correct them. He uses a humble and gentle nature to bring these lost individuals back to the right path.

Jesus Christ, during His time on earth, was always seeking to save the lost. He said that those who are well do not need a physician, for He came to save sinners, to heal the sick. He often dined with sinners and tax collectors with the purpose of reaching those on the lower rungs of society. As we learn to serve others as priests, we must also learn to empathize with those who are weak and fallen. We must weep with those who weep, and we must not think of ourselves as superior, quick to rebuke others. We need to learn the gentleness and humility of Jesus, first binding up the wounds of the hurting, then guiding them out of their troubles and back to the path God has ordained.

The fifth qualification, is having experienced weakness and suffering. The high priests of the Old Testament were also human, and they shared in the weaknesses and flaws of humanity. Therefore, they personally experienced the difficulties that come from weakness, which allowed them to empathize with others. Jesus Christ, who became flesh and took on human form, experienced hunger, thirst, and fatigue. He fully embraced the weaknesses of human nature.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus faced all kinds of temptations, yet He did not sin. He overcame every temptation from His human identity and position. He experienced the weaknesses of human nature, and He knows how to endure and not sin in the midst of human weakness. Therefore, He is the one most capable of helping those who are weak.

Of course, we cannot compare ourselves to Jesus. Like the high priests of the Old Testament, we are often weak and even fall into sin. However, our weaknesses and

failures can testify to the greatness of Christ's grace. The depth of His mercy can lift us from weakness and failure, allowing us to follow God again and run the race set before us. Sometimes, when we serve others, our experiences of failure and our testimonies of being saved by God can touch people more deeply. Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Verse 3: "Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins."

The priests of the Old Testament were also beset by weakness and subject to sin. Their duty was to offer sacrifices for the people, but they could not remain in their own weakness. They first had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, so their sins could be covered before they were qualified to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.

This brings out the sixth qualification of the high priest: he must be able to offer sacrifices for the people. As the High Priest, Jesus Christ experienced all kinds of temptations in His humanity. He also experienced human weakness, but Jesus Christ did not commit a single sin. Therefore, He did not need to offer sacrifices for Himself and was fully qualified to offer sacrifices for the people. We, however, cannot claim the same. We often find ourselves in weakness and sin, and so we must first deal with our own sins by confessing them and applying the blood of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Only after addressing the sins we know of can we be qualified as priests to help others. The first step in helping others is to bring them under the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ. We help them confess their sins, remove the barriers between them and God, and then lead them back into God's presence.

Verse 4: "And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was."

The seventh qualification is that the high priest must be called by God and cannot take this honor upon himself. In the Old Testament, the high priest held a position of great honor, especially when he wore the beautiful high priest's garments, which symbolized his honorable status and role. Every part of the priestly garments—the shoulder pieces, the breastplate of judgment, the crown, and the outer robe—was a typology of Jesus Christ. The high priest's honor was not his own but came from Jesus Christ. He had to wear the high priestly garments to enter the Holy of Holies. At that moment, what God saw was not the priest himself but someone completely covered by Christ, a person justified by God. The high priest's honor did not come from himself, nor could it be taken upon himself; it required God's calling.

Aaron was the first high priest among the Israelites, and subsequent high priests had to come from Aaron's family. Not only did they have to come from Aaron's family, but they also had to meet the qualifications listed in Leviticus 21:10–15. Only those who met these qualifications could serve as high priests and take up the office. In the Old Testament, there were ambitious individuals who tried to seize the office of priesthood for themselves. Numbers 16 records how Korah, from the tribe of Levi but not of Aaron's family, sought to take the priestly office for himself. He stirred up 250 leaders among the Israelites to rebel against Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 16:3 says, "They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?'" Their argument might have sounded reasonable, but the priesthood was not something man could seize; it was entirely dependent on God's calling. This was beyond human reasoning or justification. God immediately demonstrated His judgment, first severely punishing those filled with ambition and then proving His call upon Aaron by causing his rod to bud, blossom, and yield almonds the next day.

Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, was sent by God to carry out His plan of redemption. Thus, He became the High Priest, and He was naturally called by God. As for us, New Testament believers, we have also been called by God to be a royal priesthood. Our duty is to first bring God's salvation to those in need, then help them believe, be baptized, grow in life, and learn to serve. Finally, we present them as mature offerings to God. Once they are offered to God, they too become priests, continuing to carry out the priestly ministry. This succession began at Pentecost after Jesus ascended. It started with Jesus' 12 apostles and the early church, and it has been passed down through the generations for 2,000 years. Now, the priestly ministry has been entrusted to us, and we must continue to pass it on until Christ returns.

The author of Hebrews first lists the qualifications of Aaron as high priest, all of which Jesus Christ fulfills. As believers living in the last days, we have also inherited the office of the royal priesthood. We must learn to meet the qualifications required to serve people and minister to God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! What an honorable office it is to be a priest, and You have bestowed it upon every believer saved by grace. Help us not to take this important mission lightly but to learn to fulfill it in our church life today. Help our lives to grow, our gifts to be perfected, and may we all become priests who bring people to Jesus Christ. Bless my church and my church life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.