

The Way to the Throne

Hebrews 4:14–16 (read 4:11–5:5) | July 14, 2019

The pressure on Jews would be to go back to the old ways and rituals and offer sacrifices under the high priest and, in effect, deny Jesus by saying that his work was not sufficient.

How do we as non-Jews follow in the Hebrews' footsteps in denying our faith? Can we not benefit from the same cautions and warnings and the same exhortations?

The issue is trusting in God when you are tempted to bypass God, to neglect His Word, to compromise and undermine our faith, to turn to the created order for your hope and wisdom and spiritual strength.

In Hebrews 4 the writer has been warning the Jewish Christians not to turn back to the old way. Their ancestors who died in the wilderness missed out on the Promised Land, "the resting place of God," because of their disobedience, which was unbelief. He is deeply concerned at the thought of any of them abandoning their faith and trust in God and missing out on such a great salvation and entering into His rest, or His resting place.

Repeated warnings and appeals

Heb 2:1 "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

Heb 3:12–14 "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

The writer's arguments: Jesus is superior to all the created order (Heb 1:1–5). The old ways were pointing us forward to Jesus. Going back is a fatal error. Through this new way we have a bold way to the Throne. Hold fast to your faith.

Comparing and contrasting each priestly role in going before the throne of God: the old way, the new way, and the bold way ...

- I. **THE OLD WAY** — The Work of the High Priests on Behalf of God’s Chosen People
 - A. **Appointment:** Called by God (Heb 5:4)
 - B. **Purpose:** Mediator (5:1b)
 - C. **Duty:** Make atonement for sin (Heb 5:1c) but could only go before God’s Throne at the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place, aka Holy of Holies, once a year (Heb 9:7; Lev 16:34)
 - D. **Representation:** As a fallen man, the high priest would be able to sympathize with, identify with and relate to the people of Israel who he represented (Heb 5:2)
 - E. **Efficacy:** Limited. Constant need for sacrifices and offerings throughout the year. Priest had to go through his own ritual cleansing and offer sacrifices for his own sin (Heb 5:3), and they were also mortal, so there intercession was limited by death (Heb 7:23).

- II. **THE NEW WAY** — The Work of Jesus, the Great High Priest, on Behalf of God’s Chosen People
 - A. **Appointment:** Called by God (Heb 5:5)
 - B. **Purpose:** Mediator (1Tim 2:5)
 - C. **Duty:** Make atonement for sin (Heb 1:3, 2:17c) once for all (Heb 7:27; 9:24–26) by being the sacrifice (Heb 9:11–12), “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29, 1Cor 5:7) in his sinless life, death, resurrection (1Cor 15:3–4), and ascension (Acts 1:9–11), in which he passed through the veil into the Heaven of Heavens (Heb 4:14), where he sits at the right hand of God on the Throne (Heb 1:3), where he intercedes for His people (Heb 7:24–25).
 - D. **Representation:** Jesus is able represent us because He was one of us, could identify with and sympathize with us because of what He endured (Heb 4:15; Isaiah 53) and how he was tempted (Matt 4:1–11) to the limit (death), yet without sin (Heb 4:15).
 - E. **Efficacy:** Jesus is faithful and reliable (Heb 2:17; Heb 3:2; John 17:4) and his atoning work and intercession are limitless (Heb 7:24–25).

- III. **THE BOLD WAY** — The Work of Faith in God’s Chosen People
 - A. **Appointment:** We as born-again believers are called by God to be priests (1Pet 2:5,9).
 - B. **Purpose:** We are called to proclaim the excellencies of Christ (1Pet 5:9) and live for him as His ambassadors carrying His message of reconciliation (2Cor 5:14–20).
 - C. **Duty:** The work of Jesus, the Great High Priest, has given us access to the Throne of God (Heb 4:16). Unlike the ceremonial priest, or our great high priest, we do not supply atonement for the sins of others,

but are called to intercede for them in prayer (1Tim 2:1), to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples (Matt 28:19–20).

- D. **Representation:** We can relate to those who are spiritually dead, who have yet to be given eyes to see and ears to hear and can sympathize with their weaknesses (1Cor 6:11). We, too, suffer temptations but have the power in Christ by the Holy Spirit NOT to sin (1Cor 10:13).
- E. **Efficacy:** We waver, totter and stutter, but because of the efficacy of the work of our Great High Priest, Jesus (John 10:27–30), we exhort one another to ...
 1. Hold fast our confession (Heb 4:14)
 2. Boldly draw near to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16)