

# Hebrews

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Hebrews 4:13-16 – Help in Time of Need

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## I. Introduction

- A. In our continuing study of **Hebrews**, we've now come to **Hebrews 4:14-16** . . . Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. [16] Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- B. As you may recall, the theme of our teaching the last three Sundays has been "falling away from the faith." And if you are thinking that last weeks teaching on REST had little to do with falling away, you're wrong.
  - 1. Remember, it was Israel's unbelief that led to their falling away and it was their falling away which led to their being denied entrance into God's REST – that is, the Promised Land. And so we see that the truth about God's rest and falling away are directly and inseparably linked.
  - 2. Now you may be thinking that three Sundays on the same topic is enough, but we see from our portion today that God has not yet finished His teaching, here in Hebrews, on the subject of falling away.
  - 3. And just as we have come at this matter of falling away from the faith from three different directions over the past three Sundays, so today we will be looking at it from a fourth direction. Our focus today is on the action we can take to prevent falling away. Now as you may recall, we spent a Sunday talking about fear and diligence and how important they are to remaining faithful to God to the end of our days. Well, today's teaching adds a different dimension to that teaching.
- C. Prayer

## II. **Hebrews 4:14-16** - Finding Help In Time Of Need

- A. **Hebrews 4:14** . . . Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

1. The "THEREFORE" of verse 14 takes us back to verses **11-13** where we read ... **"Therefore** let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. [12] For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. [13] And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."
  - a. Verse **11** reminds us just how important diligence is in avoiding following Israel's example of unbelief in falling away from the faith.
  - b. Then, in verses **12-13**, God gives us a very strong warning that both His Word and He himself will judge us - searching us to the very depths of our being so that even those beliefs, treasures, and loves which we hide from everyone else, will be exposed and dealt with accordingly.
    - (1) In other words, all our thoughts, desires, hopes, dreams, fears, loves, words, and deeds - even if hidden from others, are transparent to God and His Word.
    - (2) Why? Because God's Word cuts to the deepest part of our being and exposes what it finds for what it really is ; while God, himself, sees right through us.
  - c. **Now you may be wondering why God gives us such a strong warning about His judgment. The reason is, He wants to put what we commonly call the '*fear of God*' in us concerning persevering to the end so we are sure to enter God's eternal rest.**
    - (1) Jesus tries to put this same fear of God in us in his closing statements in the Sermon on the Mount - as found in **Matthew 7:21-27** – where he says:
      - (a) Not everyone who calls me Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven - but only those who do the will of God will be allowed to enter.
      - (b) And again, not everyone who hears my teachings build their house on the rock. Some listen, but do not obey or act accordingly. Those are the ones who build their house on the sand – to their own destruction.
    - (2) And so, with this warning of God's judgment ringing in our ears, we come to the **THEREFORE** of verse **14**

2. **Hebrews 4:14 . . .** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

a. Some explanations:

(1) **Great high priest - Hebrews 7:26** ... For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

(2) **Who has passed through the heavens -**

(a) Aaron, as the first high priest of Israel, passed from the outer court through the court of the tabernacle, through the holy place, and into the Holy of Holies – which are only types of the real thing.

(b) Jesus, as our great high priest, passed from the Holy City to the cross to the grave and through the heavens to the very throne room of God – which is not a type of the real thing but the real thing itself.

(3) **Jesus the Son of God** – this statement of identification is intended to make it clear to the Jewish Christians who were reading this epistle that God has a son who is equal and one with himself – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

b. **THEREFORE**, since we have Jesus on our side, **let us hold fast our confession**.

(1) To hold fast to something is to cling to it. Clinging requires stubborn determination, relentless perseverance, and it often requires an exhausting use of energy. You will not find any clinging among the spiritually lazy or the perpetually immature or the easily distracted or the careless or the undisciplined or among those who are trying to serve two masters.

(2) But what is equally important to understand here is that clinging is our task. Holding fast our confession is our responsibility. Persevering to the end is in our hands – not God's.

c. Moving on to verse **15**, we begin to see why God makes clinging is our responsibility and why we don't need to fail at fulfilling this responsibility.

B. **Hebrews 4:15 . . .** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

1. Again, as in verse 14, let me give you some explanations:
  - a. Notice the double-negative: this implies the existence of a popular view was different from the view being stated here. Too many think God does not understand their struggle against sin. But He does!
  - b. **Sympathize with our weaknesses** – to suffer with us by entering into our experience and feeling our heartache and pain. And how is he able to do this? We and Jesus share the common experience of temptation to sin.
2. **Tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin**
  - a. Jesus felt, in his own mind, conscience, emotions, and body the great challenge of being righteous in a sinful world.
  - b. Pressing in on him were the same kind of allurements, enticements, and reasons to choose sin as press in on us.
    - (1) Are you tempted to turn to sinful things to dull the pain of rejection or to gain some pleasure when you feel down or discouraged or unloved? He was too!
    - (2) Are you tempted by immoral gazing, impure thoughts, godless passions, greed, envy, or the accumulation of earthly riches? He was too!
    - (3) Are you tempted by pride, or by the hope of being seen as someone important? So was he!
    - (4) Are you tempted to blame others instead of taking responsibility for what you have done? Are you tempted to withhold love and emotional support to those nearest and dearest when they don't treat you like you want to be treated? Are you tempted to return evil for evil – even in small, seemingly inconsequential ways? So was he!
    - (5) Are you tempted to slacking off when you ought to be working hard or to breaking your word once it has been given? He was too!
    - (6) When you don't get your way, are you tempted to feeling sorry for yourself, to crankiness, to anger, to unkindness and to obvious self-centeredness? So was he!
    - (7) Are you tempted to pressing God to do what you want without regard for what He wants? So was he!
    - (8) Do you know how hard it is and how much self-discipline it takes to remain gracious, kind, and patient with those who are slow to learn, who don't seem to get the truth as

they should, who claim they are trying as hard as they can yet it looks as if they're hardly trying at all? So does he!

- (9) Do you know the personal cost and inward pain of dying to self – day in and day out? Do you know the seemingly constant struggle of doing what you know is right in the face of temptation? Do you know how much daily preparation and vigilance and perseverance are required to overcome temptation – day after day – and remain faithful and obedient to God to the end? So does he!
- c. His times of temptation and his specific temptations were just as real as yours and mine – and they could only be overcome by the same means available to us. But the beauty of Jesus as our Great High Priest is that he never, ever sinned – not in thought, word or deed.
  - (1) In other words, he lived as we have been saved to live. And this great truth ought to drive us to him in order to constantly press him to teach us how to live **his** way.
  - (2) But that is not the point God is making here. You see, we have a high priest who perfectly and fully understands what we are up against in living the Christ-like life to the end of our days. Why? Because he faced life as we face it.
  - (3) Which brings us to the next **THEREFORE** in verse **16**.

C. **Hebrews 4:16** . . . Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- 1. **Therefore** – Because we have a high priest in Jesus who not only understands, but also sympathizes with our weaknesses – having been tempted just like we are tempted –
- 2. **Let us draw near with confidence** – As in holding fast, so drawing near is our responsibility, not God's. We are the ones who have the responsibility to come into His presence.
  - a. **Further Proof:** This truth about it being our responsibility to draw near to God is not just stated once here in Hebrews, but five times.
    - (1) **Hebrews 7:25** . . . Therefore He is able also to **save forever those who draw near** to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
    - (2) **Hebrews 10:1** . . . For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things,

can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, **make perfect those who draw near.**

(3) **Hebrews 10:22 . . . let us draw near** with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

(4) **Hebrews 11:6 . . .** And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for **he who comes to God** must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those **who seek Him.**

b. In this case, drawing near to the throne of grace is first and foremost **an act of prayer.** We have both the privilege to confidently come into God's presence to present our requests for help and the responsibility to speak our needs to Him.

(1) Yet sadly, we are prone to pray as if God had the duty or obligation to draw near to us. We imply by such praying that we are too weak or too disinclined or just plain unable to draw near to him.

(2) But contrary to popular theology, we can draw near to him if we will. Why? Because God, through Jesus Christ, has already done all that is necessary to make us able to draw near to Him, if and when we will.

(3) So get up out of your easy chair and stop expecting God to bear a responsibility that is yours to bear. Go to Him day after day. Draw near to Him with confidence, pour your heart out in prayer, and ask for what you need to live a godly life and remain faithful until your dying day.

3. **With confidence** – the confidence spoken of here is an assurance that we can draw near to the throne of grace (1) fully trusting Jesus to stand with us, (2) to completely sympathize with us, (3) to reliably represent us before the Father, (4) to ensure that our requests are adequately answered, and (5) to send us back to the battle with all the power and equipment necessary for defeating the temptations at hand.

4. **Come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need:**

a. **receive mercy** – When we draw near to God - when we come into His presence - we need mercy. Why? Because we are

soiled vessels – soiled by our ungodly and unholy ways – coming into the Holy of Holies, as it were. Because God is holy and we are not, we cannot come into His presence without mercy being extended to us any more than Esther could come into the King's presence - even though he was her husband – without the King showing mercy by raising his golden scepter to indicate his approval of her having come into his presence.

- b. **find grace to help** – To help is to give aid or provide what is necessary to accomplish a task or satisfy a need. God gives us gracious help by contributing strength and His Word and the Holy Spirit and prayer and the Body of Christ and whatever else we may truly need so that we can be victorious in resisting temptation and remaining faithful to the will and Word of God to the end of our days.
- c. What do you pray for when you implore God to give you what you need – for growing in godliness, for resisting temptation, for renewing your mind, for remaining faithful to the end?
  - (1) I want to urge you today – do not use general terms when asking God for help. Do not pray this year as you did last year – “God help me.” Such generalized prayers are an affront to God, a demonstration of your immaturity and thoughtlessness, and an indication you are not very serious about getting the help you need.
  - (2) Pray specifically. Be specific about the help you want. This requires self-observation, careful thinking, knowing God (*what He is like and what He will do*), knowing God's Word, and a reasonably mature sense of what you need. Pray the "teach me" or "show me how" prayers.

### III. Conclusion

- A. **II Timothy 1:12b** ... for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.