

## **Jesus Our High Priest**

### **Hebrews 4:14-16**

#### **Introduction**

The theme of Hebrews chapter 4 is rest and reward. There are four exhortations in this chapter that relate to the Believer's rest or the life of rest; "let us therefore fear" (4:1-8); that through disobedience rooted in unbelief we fail to appropriate the promises of God; that we fail to go forward in perfection (maturation) Hebrews 6:1; "the full assurance of hope" (6:11); "inheriting the promises" (6:12).

"Let us therefore labor" (4:9-12) or give diligence to enter this rest (this is the opposite of drifting; 2:1-3). Maturity in Christ demands discipline and diligence; this rest is not the rest of salvation but victorious Christian living. The secret to entering this rest is the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). If we allow the Word of God to judge us; expose us; and instruct us; we will not fail to inherit the blessings of God. Israel rebelled against the Word; refusing to hear God's voice and wandered in the wilderness or in defeat for 40 years. Believers who fail to hear and heed the Word of God; who fail to allow the Word to pierce the heart—will remain spiritually immature. It takes diligence and discipline to mature spiritually and to apply the Word of God faithfully.

The chapter provides two more exhortations. "Let us hold fast our profession (v.14) or confession. Confession here means our testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithfulness to us. We are urged or exhorted to live for Jesus and gain the promised blessing. The Jews who wandered in the wilderness had lost their confession—even though they had experienced the miracles of God, liberation by God, salvation from slavery and Egypt; guidance and direction by the pillar of fire and cloud of glory. We share the tragic example and miserable testimony of the Children of Israel when we experience God's saving power and refuse to walk in God's victorious power. God brought them out of Egypt. But always they struggled to believe and obey and mature and apply God's Word. Their unbelief robbed them of God's blessings.

The final exhortation is in the "Let us come to the throne of Grace" (4:15-16). We have a High Priest who knows our temptations and weakness and who has endured the tests that we must endure. When times of testing and temptation come we can turn to the throne and obtain help from Christ. Jesus can and will help us. The writer of Hebrews will elaborate on this theme at great length in the later chapters of this book. The writer puts the exhortation here for the person who is screaming; "I can't go on!" "I don't know if I can make it in this thing called the Christian life!" "I don't have what it takes to be a Christian!" You don't have what it takes to be a Christian. Warren Wiersbe writes; "No believer has strength enough to cross Jordan and conquer the enemy! but we have a great High Priest who has mercy and "grace to help in the nick of time!" (that is the literal meaning of v.16)" (see *Expository Outlines of the New Testament*; pp.684-686).

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#### **Hold Fast Your Confession (v.14)**

*Hebrews 4:14 (NKJV); 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

Remember the audience is Jewish. The writer draws attention to the fact that Jesus is a great High Priest. Once again the emphasis is on the greatness and superiority of Jesus Christ. The priest stood in the place of mediation between man and God. The credentials Jesus possesses is far greater than all the High Priests who went before Him. The reasons given: Jesus has passed “through the heavens”. Jesus is before the very throne of God. He is in the presence of the Supreme Being; the self-existent God of the Universe. Jesus is the Son of God. This is Jesus’ heavenly name. Jesus lives in the very presence of God.

In the Old Testament and in the New Testament Israel had a number of different High Priests. None of them were called great.

The humanity of Jesus qualifies Him to be our High Priest. The Deity of Jesus qualifies Him to pass into the heavens to the very throne of God.

What is our confession? The testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an admission concerning the truth about Jesus. In the early church they wrote creeds that incorporate that basics of our confessions (like the Apostle’s Creed). Augustine wrote; “The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed) so that believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand why they believe.”

#### **Go Quickly To The Throne of Grace (vv.15-16)**

*15 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.*

*16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

The writer of Hebrews gives us a glimpse of the significance of the role Jesus plays as our High Priest.

- 1. The High Priest’s sympathy.**
- 2. The High Priest’s purity.**
- 3. The High Priest’s authority.**
- 4. The High Priest’s ability.**

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The writer invites us to consider Jesus as our High Priest. He draws our attention to Jesus' sympathy, purity, authority and ability. All of which we will consider in a moment. The benefits of having Jesus as our Savior and High Priest means we have access to God's mercy and God's grace.

### **Our Lord's Sympathy (v.15a)**

*"...who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are. . ."*

Remember in verses 12-13; the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (v.13) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

These passages focus on scrutiny. Our passages focus is on sympathy! If the Word of God is powerful and living (it is); if it discerns our thoughts and motives (it does); if the Word of God is a mirror reflecting our lives; and exposes the truth of what kind of person we really are; how are we to escape the Bible's judgment about us? The Word of God cuts and separates the proud soul from the humble spirit. It separates the sinful soul from the righteous spirit. It separates the rebellious soul from the believing spirit. The Word of God discerns (sifts, judges, analyzes etc); the thoughts the intents of the human heart. The Bible points out our weaknesses!

The KJV; "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; or "who cannot sympathize"—(Greek; *sunpathesai*); feel—suffer with—it means to sympathize and feel with a person to the point that the hurt and pain are actually felt within one's own heart. The idea is that Jesus suffers—when we suffer. He knows and suffers with us! Does Jesus know what it means to be sick; to suffer trials, to face temptations, sense loneliness; emptiness, grief, loss, hunger, lack of money, or clothes, or suffer persecution, incarceration; does Jesus know what it is like—to face the prospect of a painful, prolonged death?

You name the trial. You name the test. You name the temptation. Now ask; "Does Jesus understand and feel what I feel?" We could ask for no greater Savior; no greater intercessor; no greater High Priest.

The Lord Jesus knows human life—in all its joys and sorrows and temptations and trials!

### **Our Lord's Purity (v.15b)**

*"...yet without sin."*

Does sympathy require impurity? I don't think so. Do you have to sin—to really suffer from the effects of sin? Jesus knew no sin. Why is this important? Because it serves as the foundation for our salvation! No man will be saved—unless Jesus really was sinless. Why? The sacrifice

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that God required was a pure life—a holy life—a sinless life. Only perfection can stand before God; God commands and demands perfection.

Jesus spoke to the religious leaders in John 8:45-47; “But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. (46) “Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? (v.47) “He who is of God hears Gods words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

But the religious leaders did accuse Jesus of being demon possessed. The religious leaders explanation for the supernatural power of Jesus was he was energized by demon spirits. Jesus answers their accusation by saying; “I do not have a demon: but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. (v.50) “And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. (51) “Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

William Barclay writes; “He is like us in all things—except that He emerged from it all completely sinless. . . The fact that Jesus was without sin necessarily means that He knew depths and tensions and assaults of temptation which we never know and never can know. So far from His battle being easier it was immeasurably harder. Why? For this reason—we fall to temptation long before the tempter has put out the whole of his power. We are easily vanquished; we never have temptation at its fiercest and its most terrible, because we fall long before that stage is reached. But Jesus was tempted as we are—and far beyond what we are. For in His case the tempter puts everything he possessed into the assault, and Jesus withstood it. Think of it in terms of pain. There is a degree of pain which the human frame can stand—then when that degree is reached a person faints and loses consciousness; he has reached his limit. There are agonies of pain he does not know, because there came collapse. It is so with temptation. We collapse before temptation; but Jesus went to our stage of temptation and far beyond it and still did not collapse. It is true to say that He was tempted in all things as we are; but it is also true to say that never was man tempted as He was” (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 38).

I love the illustration of gold in the fire. When gold is taken and refined it goes through a series of processes; the refinement process is to make sure the impurities are removed. The gold is placed in crucible and repeatedly heated and the impurities removed. But once this process is complete; the gold is sent to an assayer; and once again the gold is placed in the crucible, heated and melted one final time. It is not to remove impurities but rather to demonstrate that the gold is indeed pure. The temptations of the Lord were not intended to see if Jesus could sin; but to demonstrate that Him sinless.

We are placed into the fire to remove impurities.  
Jesus was placed into the fire to prove His purity.

### **Our Lord’s Authority (v.16a)**

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*“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace”*

The throne speaks of our Lord’s authority. Grace means favor. Throne means the place where justice or mercy or judgment originates. **This is the place where the believer is received (by Divine Sovereign Grace) as Christ was received. We are accepted by God according to the full, finished, work of Christ (see Newell p.150).**

In the Old Testament no Jew could boldly go into the Holy of Holies and approach the mercy seat. Only the High Priest. Only once a year. Unlike the Jew we can come boldly to the throne of grace (the mercy seat).

The writer urges the reader to access boldly the throne (authority) of grace. Why does the writer urge the reader to “come boldly”? Because we need not fear rejection!

Jesus isn’t going to reject us. Jesus is in heaven. He has made the full expiation (satisfaction) with His own blood.

John Piper; “Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin. Grace is power, not just pardon. Therefore the effort we make to obey God is not an effort done in our own strength, but in the strength which God supplies.”

The writer connects Christ’s authority to Christ’s grace.

Grace has been called; “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” Matthew Henry wrote; “Grace is the free, undeserved goodness and favor of God to mankind.” We can think of grace as the favor of God which He freely gives without regard to human merit for those who place their trust in God.

### **Our Lord’s Ability (v.16b)**

*“...that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

God’s grace is available to strengthen us. This is not simply mercy to save us or grace to save us. This is mercy and grace in our lives. This is the mercy and grace we need when our circumstances seem overwhelming. Mercy is a word that often speaks of God’s relieving human suffering or human misery (see Homer Kent; *The Epistle of Hebrews*; p.93).

2 Corinthians 9:8; “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

John Stott wrote; “Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues.”

Does our Lord know we need mercy? Does our Lord know we need grace?

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The “time of need” seems personal. In times of personal weakness, personal temptation, personal sin, we have access to God through Christ for our personal problem.

### Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews is trying to convince the reader that God has made an adequate provision for the Christian (Messianic Believer) to live in victory. We can avoid the traps that come from an evil heart of unbelief (3:12).

Since Jesus knows our nature (fallen) and our need (mercy and grace); we should make use of Him!

The believer can fully rest in Christ’s work for her or him. Our conscience is cleansed by Christ’s blood. The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death (Rom.8:2).

Rest—from guilt; deliverance—from the power of sin—through identification with Jesus in His death and burial and resurrection and journey to heaven (the confession of our faith).

We have our Lord’s approval. We have the example of Jesus. We have the Word of Jesus. We have the all sufficient assistance of Jesus. We have a High Priest who understands our struggles, our weakness, and ever lives to intercede for us.

We can rest in Christ. We can go forward in maturity and victory.

Let us therefore fear (vv.1-8) that disobedience and unbelief will keep us from going forward; and tempt us to turn back.

Let us therefore labor (vv.9-12) or give diligence to walk carefully, to not repeat the failure of Israel,—and to allow the Word of God to guide us (v.12). The Word of God is our answer to every Spiritual problem; we will not fail to inherit our blessings—if we allow the Word of God to speak to us; and we obey His Voice; the Bible will provide scrutiny to our hearts and our lives.

Let us therefore hold fast our confession—not our salvation—confession—to say the same thing. The Jews lost their confession in the wilderness—because they would not trust the Lord.

**Let us come to the throne of grace; the scrutiny of the Bible will give way to the sympathy of our Savior! Jesus is our mercy Seat. When we come to Jesus we come to a throne of mercy and grace; not a throne of judgment. Jesus encourages us to live in His Word, labor in prayer, and let Jesus lead us into our spiritual Canaan; the place of maturity and rest and blessing.**

The sympathy, purity, authority and ability of Jesus—is superior in every way—and can keep us, mature us, protect us, against all trial, all temptation, all doubt, all fear.

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