

Hebrews 4:14-16

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[0 : 00] Going through the book of Hebrews for quite some time now, I think most of you would probably know the main context of Hebrews. Obviously written to a Hebrew audience and talking about how Jesus is better than the Old Covenant.

He's the fulfillment of the Old Covenant so that all the priests, sacrifices, everything that came before was a foreshadowing pointing to Christ. And this writer, whether it be Paul or Apollos or someone else, is writing to these Hebrew believers to help them see that they don't need to go back to the Old Covenant.

Some people are telling them, you need to come back. You need to come back to the law of Moses. And others may be on defense, and they're trying to figure out which way to kind of jump.

Do we believe Jesus is the Messiah and that He's the fulfillment of these things? Or do we stay with the idea that the Pharisees and others carry? And so, it's addressing all these things.

So, we pick up today in verse 14 of chapter 4. It says, 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.

[1 : 51] Just join me in prayer. Lord, we are very grateful that we have an eternal, perfect High Priest that stands between us and Your holiness.

That we can draw near with assurance and confidence to You because of Him. And during this time, I pray that Your Spirit would be our teacher, that You would help us to hear the Word, believe the Word, and apply Your Word to our lives.

That You would just meet us wherever we are in a state of doing very well and confident, or someone who is very downtrodden and discouraged.

That You would just apply Your Word where needed. That You would just be honored. That Jesus would just be clearly seen.

We just ask that in His name. Amen. So, our passage today has a lot of really awesome things to look at, as always.

[3 : 04] But today, I want to focus in on this idea of confidence. Confidence to face God one day and to stand before God one day. And even now, while we're in this life, to have confidence before God.

Would some of you say that, in general, you lack confidence? Just in general, in an earthly manner. You lack self-confidence just to face the world around you.

Maybe it's like social situations where you go to a party, or a wedding, or a family gathering, or a job interview, and you just shut down.

Like, you have no confidence just to face people around you. You're terrified of being for someone looking at you and then evaluating you and finding you lacking in some way.

And so, you struggle with anxiety and self-doubt and uncertainty. You lack just confidence to face the normal, everyday things.

[4 : 07] And all of that is just a part of the human story, to some degree, of just originating in sin. So, don't worry. This isn't a self-help, get-some-confidence kind of message at all.

You're the wrong place to hear that. On the other hand, a lot of pop psychology therapists, psychiatrists, they all understand why there are such things as guilt and shame and anxiety.

They understand those things. And they'll say, like, well, you know, it came from your childhood.

You were treated really harshly, and therefore you carry a very low self-esteem, and that's why you have anxiety.

But the problem is, they can't answer the question of, like, why did those things exist? Why do things like anxiety even exist? And self-doubt and fear, like, where do they come from?

They can't really understand the source of those things. And we have the answer. It's sin. And others of us here may be on the other side of it, where we're very confident, very assertive. [5 : 19] We think that there's nothing that we can't face that we can't overcome, and we have a track record of accomplishments to kind of show us that. You're not very timid.

You feel like you're sort of invincible. And our culture kind of breeds this kind of confidence in a lot of ways. We make people want to think that way. There are people who climb Mount Everest or won some championship fight or competition, engineering the world's greatest structures and machines and generals that have conquered empires, etc.

Just a very strong confidence that you think that you think that you can do anything. But whether you're lacking confidence or you have a kind of a false self-confidence, all of us need to ask this question.

Like, in this very hour, would you lack confidence to stand and approach a holy, majestic, sovereign God?

And the truth is, even the most confident of you would shriek. Like, you would be decimated. You would fall apart in terror.

[6 : 30] No argument you would bring to the throne and no sacrifice would be enough at all to make you stand before God that you would bring on your own account. We read in Scripture a lot of stories of very, like, moral, upright, good men, better than any of us, who were all of a sudden taken into God's presence.

Isaiah, Isaiah, John, these men who knew God and worshipped God, but when they were faced with, like, the burning presence of God's holiness, they were, they couldn't even lift their head. And they were decimated by fear. And that's how it is. A lot of the people in this world who don't know God, I've met some before, maybe you have, they think they're just going to, like, walk up to God one day and just say, Hey, I'm not afraid of you.

Like, here's kind of the deal. And Psalm 68 has something very scary to say. It talks about God's enemies.

And it says, They will flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, they shall be driven away. Listen to this. As wax melts before a fire, so the wicked shall perish before God.

[7 : 48] They won't stand. Like, even the most confident of us will be decimated. So, what kills our confidence to face God?

Well, in general, there's a deeper spiritual answer. It's sin. But what decimates our confidence in a lot of ways is guilt and shame.

Real things that are born out of sin. There's one writer I like that said this. He said, Guilt and shame are twins. Born in the Garden of Eden.

Only moments apart. And even though they're twins, they are not identical. Guilt is usually tied to an event. And it says, You did something bad.

Shame is tied to a person. And it says, I am bad. Guilt is the wound. And shame is the scar. When you violate God's laws and rebel against Him, you feel guilt.

[8 : 51] And that emotion is simultaneously joined by shame. Guilt says you did something wrong. Shame says that's why you need to hide.

You're no good. You deserve to live in darkness. That's like how those two are kind of tied together. So, they will steal your confidence before God. And even as believers who have already given our lives to Christ and had our sins forgiven and paid for, we still struggle with guilt and shame a lot. And that's a gospel issue that we have to keep coming back to. But our writer today, he gives us a few things to hold on to.

If you look at verse 14, it says, Hold fast. So, grasp on to this for dear life. Hold on to these things tightly.

And a right understanding about what I'm about to say will give you confidence to approach God's throne. All right? So, I'm going to break this down in three different ways.

[9 : 56] But hold fast to these things. The first one is, hold fast. Jesus is our great high priest. Verse 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. This isn't the first time this idea of Jesus being the high priest has been introduced in this book.

Usually, someone would have just read this straight through. They would have just, you know, broken it up into chapters and verses. But the point being, Aaron and his descendants in Levitical priesthood were only serving an earthly copy or shadow of what's in heaven.

They fell short in many ways. They only could carry out their duties in a physical thing like the tabernacle or the temple. But they were a picture of what is like in heaven.

And God temporarily appointed these sacrifices and these priests to be a substitute that he just put up with by his mercy, right? That we're going to point to a greater fulfillment in Christ.

[11:09] But no earthly priest ever has ascended into heaven. No earthly priest has gone before God's actual throne in heaven and made intercession for sinners.

They all tasted death. And they can't continue in their office. And they were sinful, so they couldn't become a sacrifice for other sinners.

They fell short in so many ways. And I wanted to share with you probably my favorite word in the book of Hebrews. And oddly enough, it's not a word that's even in our text.

But it's used in chapter 2 of Hebrews. Chapter 2, verse 10. And then the very well-known Hebrews 12, verse 2.

And the word is archegos. Archegos. One of those words I think I know how to say okay. It's such an amazing word.

[12:10] Just dive into this word. It's got a really rich history. William Tyndale, who first, well, one of the first to translate the Bible into English, was a master of language and words.

And when he was studying this, it was a word that he really took a lot out of. So that phrase in Hebrews 12 that we know, Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, he was the first one to actually write that in English.

And it was from the archegos that he got that from. But what it means is a leader, a prince, someone who goes before others and affords an example, a pioneer, someone who kind of goes and clears the way for others to follow.

And kind of a picture, if you would, like an elite military group kind of going through the jungle. And all of a sudden, they reach this huge canyon they can't really get across. There's no way around it. There's no time. And so this one guy is kind of the leader of the group, says, I got this. And he figures out a way to get a line over across that little ravine.

[13:19] And he ties it to a tree on the other side. And he crosses over himself first. And it secures everything and makes it safe. And then he says, come on, you guys follow me. Like after that.

That's sort of a picture of the archegos. And even though it's not mentioned in this text, the principle of it is applied all throughout Hebrews. This idea that Jesus did a work and that he prepared the way for a lot of other people to follow him.

Right? That's kind of where we get this. And example in Hebrews chapter 2, it says, But just keep that word in your head throughout our study of Hebrews.

And I'm sure we'll dive into it more in Hebrews chapter 12. But in our text, it gives us this idea that even though all the other priests of the Old Testament have died, never to live again in this life, it's over because Jesus put them out of business.

He is the final high priest between God and man. And as Hebrews 7.16 says, He has his priesthood by an indestructible life. Such awesome.

[15:00] Our lives are so destructible. We fall apart so easy. Can you imagine having a life that is indestructible? And Christ is our indestructible high priest.

It says in our text that he passed through the heavens, which calls to mind his ascension that his followers witnessed in Acts chapter 1. It says, When he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

He ascended into heaven through the clouds into the very presence of God. And so before Christ, the holiest place was in the temple, in the Holy of Holies, where a priest would only enter once a year, right, to make atonement and make intercession for the people.

But Jesus didn't ascend into an earthly copy like the temple. I think if any of you ever get a chance, we have a lot of people here who have been to Jerusalem. My favorite thing to go and see would probably be like the, what's left over of the temple mount.

And just see, that's all that's left of that temple. It's like, what clearer way could God say, this is over. No more. There's a, we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

[16:19] And Jesus didn't ascend into an earthly copy, but he ascended into heaven itself. He passed through the heavens. In chapter 9, verse 24, it says, For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, and now appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

Where our high priest lives right now, this very minute, he has immediate access to God day and night. In chapter 7, verse 25, it says, He always lives to make intercession for us. Because of the sin, we need someone to be our advocate. We need someone to make intercession on our behalf to a holy God. And also, in verse 14, we see that Jesus is the Son of God.

So, point being, he's not just some creature that's been exalted to a heavenly place. He's the divine Son of God that created all things. I read about that in chapter 1, if you want to go back and look. He's the divine Son of God that created all things. He's perfect in every way. And that's why his sacrifice matters so much. That's why God can look at that and accept it.

[17:44] So, when Jesus goes into that place, he doesn't take the blood of lambs or bulls or goats. He takes his own body, his own blood. And when God looks at that, he says, That's enough.

The debt's been paid, and my righteousness is vindicated. Because of the weight of that sacrifice. Nothing that we could ever produce.

So, God overlooks our sins so that we can come into God's presence because of our great high priest who gave us his own blood so that we can stand in that place with him.

And he always lives forever, making intercession for us. So, that's number one. Number two, hold fast.

Jesus is our sympathetic high priest. Verse 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.

[18:50] So, this would be huge in the Greco-Roman world because they had this idea that God was apothea.

He did not have any kind of emotion or feeling like we do as human beings. They thought that if God did have emotions, he could be kind of manipulated to do a certain thing.

You ever notice that? You can manipulate people by getting them to feel a certain way. Well, they thought, that can't be God. So, stoic philosophers like Seneca, Emperor Marcus Aurelius, you know, gladiator, they believed that that was a central attribute of God, apothea, without passion or suffering, making him a very indifferent God, very stoic God.

And we also know that the scripture, from the scripture, that the Jews had a much clearer picture of who God actually was. They knew that he did, he wasn't void of emotion, but he was sovereign and that he was almighty.

So, yes, God is God, but some of you may think he still has no idea like what I'm actually going through, how terrible life is down here and all the weaknesses that come in this life.

[20:16] Some of you are in great weakness right now. He has no idea, God has no idea what pain or abandonment or suffering or hardship, he doesn't know what that's like.

So, you know, people kind of push God aside because of that. But we read in our text that Jesus is very, very sympathetic towards our position.

and why is that? How is that? Because Christ is the divine Son of God, but he was made a man.

We read in John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word, the Logos, was God.

further down, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory, the glory as the only Son of the Father full of grace and truth.

So we know that he was divine and we know that he was fully man at the same time. But we know that he didn't account his equality with God as something to be held on to. But he came down and emptied himself taking on the form of a servant in the likeness of man.

[21:30] He became a living, breathing man just like us. He took on human flesh, emotions, and all its inherent weaknesses.

He didn't just imagine how we feel, he actually experienced how we feel. Huge difference. He sympathizes with us, he's tasted our struggles. When you read the Gospels, you'll just watch the interactions that he has with people.

Jesus suffered emotionally, greatly. Weeping, persecution, rejected, grief, anguish. Isaiah calls him the man of sorrows.

Like he defined what sorrow was. So, if that's how you feel, he can relate. Physically, he grew hungry, he grew fatigued, he got tired, he had to eat, he felt physical pain, he was whipped, and killed, and beaten, and then we know that he was tempted by all the forces of evil, even by Satan himself.

He was tempted to turn down power, prestige, indulgence of natural desires on his way to the cross. You realize he could have had a hundred different ways out if he really had desired, he could have just backed out, but he didn't.

[22 : 50] He chose to honor his father and chose to save us. He lived as a child, lived as a boy, and then also as a man. He covered that whole sphere.

So, some people catch this. Yes, he endured all that we endured for his, you know, 30-ish years, but he was tempted just like we're tempted, but yet, it says, without sin.

So, he never caved in, he never broke to sinful temptation. It's helpful to be reminded of that. Just to be tempted does not mean you've sinned. You don't cross into it.

You're being allured by it, but by God's grace, you can turn away from it. So, Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin. Peter wrote, Jesus committed no sin, neither was any deceit found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, that's the worst, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, and when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

[24 : 00] So, Jesus endured all these things, but did not sin. A lot of wise people throughout the history of the church have pointed out that this makes like Jesus' temptations not weaker than ours, but stronger than ours.

So, one of those men, C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, written not too long after the Second World War in 1952, talks about this idea of temptation in regard to Christ.

He says, no man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means.

This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find the strength of the German army, because they just fought the German army, by fighting against it, not by giving in to it.

You find out the strength of the wind by trying to walk against it, not by laying down. A man who gives into temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later.

[25 : 16] This is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find our strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it.

And Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation really means.

The only complete realist. So, my analogy is I like to go to the gym and work out, can't you tell? But one of my favorite things to do to meet new guys and have gospel conversations at the gym is just to walk in the middle of these guys that are just enormous, lifting these huge dumbbells and barbells.

And I met one guy, he's with the Hall County SWAT team, so he's pretty jacked. But I actually met him because he was just lifting some serious weights.

[26 : 24] I think he had almost every weight on the little thing on his bar. he just did a set and he was doing like the catching. I just kind of walked up beside him and I reached down and I didn't even know him and I was like, and he was like going, and I was like, man, I don't want to show you up and I just walked away.

but that's like how I met him. But, example with weights, you know, I can bench press my weight, which isn't that bad.

But, there's no way I could like take the full weight of like what is actually on that little weight holder thing. I don't even know what it's called.

I look at that and I'm like, yeah, I couldn't bear all that. So, I don't really know like how much weight that really is because I've never done it. If I did, it would just pin me and kill me. And, but, like a guy like my buddy can pick up that whole thing though.

So, it is sort of a little silly picture of what it's like with us. We can only do so much and then we break. We capitulate before we feel the final full assault of what sin is.

[27 : 33] We cave in very easily. But, Jesus endured the full pressure of temptation. A lifetime of it. A whole lifetime of it. And then it climaxed. It even got worse at the spectacular abuse and abandonment that he faced at the cross and the passion that he had in that last week. So, he is capable of like unparalleled sympathy towards us. He went through far more than any of you have and far more than all of us combined.

And because of that, I know deep down a lot of is to say, I just want somebody to understand me. Like, I get they can tell me truth and I get they can tell me the right thing to do, but I just don't care. I want someone who knows what it's like, who's been there.

You might have the privilege of doing that, but you might not. You just need to listen to truth sometimes. But, you do in Christ. He knows. He knows what it's like. No one suffered more or endured more abuse.

[28 : 39] No one deserved it less or had some reason to fight back than him. We read earlier, just hold your place. Look at chapter 2. Rewind Hebrews 2 verse 17.

Hebrews chapter 2 verse 17. Nathan kind of, I think, preached on this and nailed the same idea pretty well. Hebrews 2 verse 17 says, See that?

There's the grounds of his sympathy. He's been there. And if you're getting wiped out, getting your clock cleaned by sin and temptation, he can help you.

He knows what it's like. He's sympathetic towards where you are. And so right now, if you look back in Hebrews 4, we can go to him in prayer right now and just say, get me through this.

Pray for deliverance from temptation and he will do it. I remember one time I was being tempted to do something I shouldn't do and I just cried out loud, like, Lord, everything in me right now wants to do this.

[30 : 16] But I know that you created me and you have power over everything that's in me. So help me in this moment deny what this wants and to endure. And I'm telling you, he delivers.

He can sustain you. He understands. He can help those who are being tempted. He's tasted our struggle, like it says, in every respect. So this has meaning for us right now, like in the present as believers that can go to God in prayer and get help and deliverance from our sin and temptation. But it also has a great future meaning that when we stand before God one day, we're standing with a high priest who knows, again, like where we're coming from. He knows. Have you experienced that deliverance before?

Have you watched and prayed that you didn't fall into temptation? Most of us don't even want to put up a fight where it's like, okay, and we break and give in. But Jesus can sustain you, and He has. Thirdly, and lastly, back in chapter 4, verse 16, number 3, hold fast. Jesus, our high priest, gives us confidence.

[31 : 32] Jesus, our high priest, gives us confidence. Verse 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.

Something I learned in my studies was this word confidence has a great usage in classical Greek literature that denotes free and open speech between citizens with one another.

Free and open speech of citizens with one another. But the Greeks never used it to apply to having free and open speech with a deity like Zeus or Athena.

It was never applied in that context. But what's really cool is the writer of Hebrews took that word and he applied it to a relationship with God. We can have free and open speech before God.

Don't run too far with that. Like freedom of the press kind of stuff. That's not what it means. It just means that we can speak honestly to God with reverence and we can pour out our hearts before him.

[32 : 38] And the real blunt term is frank boldness, an outpouring of our heart to God. We can confidently approach him and speak with him.

Because of Christ, our high priest, we can receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. So, question, where does your confidence to face God one day come from?

Church attendance, doing good works, giving generously, being a good moral person, not going to cut it. The last place I want you to look is just in our Hebrews as well, everything in Hebrews today.

Hebrews chapter 10, we'll get there eventually. Hebrews chapter 10, just flip over to verse 19.

Here's another picture of what we're talking about.

10, 19, says, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us, through the curtain, that is, through His

flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, here's the same kind of language, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

[34 : 07] So, Christ's blood, the torn curtain of the temple at that time, and Christ's great sympathetic high priestly work is our confidence and our assurance to stand before God one day.

So, get this in your head. Our confidence and our assurance to approach God is created by realizing we have access to Him, not because of anything in us or anything we've done.

Throw that away. The confidence that we need is created by realizing that Christ has done the work for us and that we are found in Him, not by something that you have done.

So, it's not self-confidence, it's Christ's confidence. So, we can stand in God's presence again with full assurance, not because we paid our dues and we approved our mettle to God, but because Christ has done all that is required to help us stand there.

So, if you want to face God's judgment one day, you want to approach the throne, like now, freely, but also in the future, to have fear, a reverent fear of God, but to approach with confidence, you have to realize that that's based on your acceptance in Christ and not anything you bring at all.

[35 : 36] God's love. It's all about Jesus being our eternal high priest. High priest language may sound really foreign to you, right? But, point being, you need someone to go and stand between you and a holy God, because you're not going to be able to do it on your own, and Jesus is that person.

So, imagine yourself in a context like Isaiah, where he was facing the throne of God, or John in Revelation 4, where he looks upon this throne that has lightning around it and peals of thunder, tying to what Paul said, he lives in unapproachable light, God does.

And, you're lying on your face in terror, afraid to approach and ascend those stairs to stand before God.

You see the cherubim and other creatures singing the praises of God, and you're terrified. You think, if I approach that throne, I am done.

I'm finished. I'm too sinful. I'm not confident. And then you feel like a real strong but gentle hand come on you, and you look up and you see the radiant face of the Son of God, and he says, you're right, if you approach that throne by yourself, you're finished.

[37 : 06] But I know, like the dark world that you came from, I've been there, I've tasted it, I know, I understand your weakness, but if you've given your life to me, you won't be consumed before this throne, and my father won't be dishonored.

If you come through me, he will not turn me away, so he will accept you. He won't only accept you, but he'll bring you into his family and love you and make you one of his own.

So come with me and approach this throne of grace with confidence, only through Jesus. that's our hope, and that's where our confidence is founded in his work.

But he understands our weakness, he gets it. So no matter what you're going through, he's been there, he understands. So go to him now and ask for the grace to endure whatever it is, and he will help you.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.