

GOOD SINCE

"SINCE WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST"

HEBREWS 4:14-16

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1-2,

*I lift up my eyes to the hills-
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

Some Christians think of salvation in terms of fire insurance—nothing more, nothing less. They "got saved" fearing the prospect of swimming for eternity in the lake of fire. For them salvation is all about destination. They were destined for hell before; they are destined for heaven after. "Spiritual minimalists," that's what they are. All they need, all they want is to know that they'll wind up in heaven someday, albeit not someday soon. Thank God, salvation involves so much more than they imagine.

Paul writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all

'Merciful' implies the capacity to understand and to help those dependent upon his ministry.

– William L. Lane

wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:3-10). Wow and amen! The cosmic implications of what God has done and will yet do in connection with salvation in Christ Jesus is mind-boggling.

Jesus, our *personal* savior, is also Jesus, our *personal* high priest. On his empathy for those who believe, one commentator writes: "Because he was exposed to testing as they are, he knows experientially what humiliation entails. That the one who has this fellow-feeling with the people of God appears in the presence of God as their high priestly advocate invests his compassion and help with a quality that guarantees they will be able to endure their situation and obtain the salvation promised to them" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47a, *Hebrews 1-8*, 122).

Unfortunately, "spiritual minimalists" have little interest in talk about priests, especially the Old Testament variety. Too bad, too, most of us Gentile Christians, unlike the Hebrew Christians to whom the book of Hebrews was written, know precious little about the Aaronic priesthood. As a result we have trouble appreciating that Jesus is our "merciful and faithful high priest" or that he was made like us in every way for this very purpose (Heb 2:17). Hard to believe that such an obscure truth has such practical implications. Readers of the book of Hebrews, who were tempted to abandon their Christian confession and return to the practice of Judaism, needed to know that they had not "just" a high priest but a "great" high priest to whom they could turn for mercy and grace.

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One writer explores two very practical implications to be drawn from the fact that Jesus is a superior high priest to Aaron. He writes, "First, there is no need in giving up our profession just because we are going through testing and trial (Heb 4:14). The word translated 'profession' means 'confession.' These Hebrew Christians were tempted to give up their confession of faith in Christ and their confidence in Him (see Heb. 3:6, 14). It was not a matter of giving up their salvation, since salvation through Christ is eternal (Heb. 5:9). It was a matter of their public confession of faith. By returning to the Old Testament system, they would be telling everyone that they had no faith in Christ (see Gal. 2:11-21). This kind of unbelief would only bring reproach to Christ's name . . . The second conclusion is this: there is no need to go back because we can come boldly into the presence of God and get the help we need (Heb. 4:16). No trial is too great, no temptation is too strong, but that Jesus Christ can give us the mercy and grace that we need, when we need it. 'But He is so far away!' we may argue. 'And He is the perfect Son of God! What can He know about the problems of weak sinners like us?' But that is a part of His greatness! When He was ministering on earth in a human body, he experienced all that we experience, and even more, After all, a sinless person would feel temptations and trials in a much greater way than you and I could ever feel them. Christ was tempted, yet He did not sin; and He is able to help us when we are tempted. If we fail to hold fast our confession, we are not proving that Jesus Christ has failed. We are only telling the world that we failed to draw on His grace and mercy when it was freely available to us" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2 vols., 2:290, 91).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Cf., another translation

14 Let us, then, hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we have a great High Priest who has gone into the very presence of God—Jesus, the Son of God. 15 Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. 16 Let us have confidence, then, and approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it. (GNT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 14.
- * Box "since" indicating *reason* in v. 14.
- * Circle "great" in v. 14.
- * Highlight "high priest" in vv. 14, 15.
- * Circle "the heavens" v. 14.
- * Underline "let us hold firmly" in v. 14.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 15.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 15.
- * Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 15.
- * Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 15.
- * Circle "without sin" in v. 15.
- * Underline "let us then approach" in v. 16.
- * Circle "throne of grace" in v. 16.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 16.
- * Circle "mercy" and "grace" in v. 16.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Given the fact that we have a "great high priest," what should we do?
2. What is it about our high priest that makes him great?
3. Rather than let our faith slip, we are to "hold firmly to the faith we profess." What does that mean?
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 15.
5. Verse 15 mentions "our weaknesses." What weaknesses?
6. Put the point of the *comparison* in verse 15 in your own words.
7. Although he was tempted, Jesus was "without sin." What does that mean?
8. To what does approaching the "throne of grace" refer? How do we do that?
9. Mercy and grace are available to us. What's the difference between them?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the kind of help you think our high priest is prepared to give to those who come to him.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The first Christians were Jews who responded to the preaching of the apostles following the resurrection of Christ. According to the book of Acts, about 3000 believed on the Day of Pentecost (2:41); not long after, the number of men grew to about 5000 (4:4). It was only later that Gentiles were added to the church (10:23-48). The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem and its environs before the destruction of the city in A.D. 70. As a result of their newfound faith in Christ, these Jews were being persecuted by other Jews (7:54-8:3). One author writes, "Those Jews who were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ were 'put out of the synagogue' (John 16:2). They were no longer considered Jews or members of the commonwealth of Israel. They were treated as Gentiles. They were no longer welcomed in the synagogue or in the temple. They also gave up any possibility of employment because they were considered unclean" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith that Endures*, 17). No wonder some of them began to count the cost of their confession and look for a way out. Another writer describes their dilemma this way, "The Hebrew Christians who received this letter were sorely tempted to return to the religion of their fathers. After all, any Jew could travel to Jerusalem and see the temple and the priests ministering at the altar. Here was something real, visible, concrete. When a person is going through persecution, as these Hebrew Christians were, it is much easier to walk by sight than by faith. Some of us have doubted the Lord under much less provocation than these people were enduring" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2 vols. 2:290).

The writer of the book of Hebrews gives these beleaguered believers a reason to persevere; they have a "great" high priest. With the mention of a high priest in 4:14, he picks up where he left off earlier. In chapter two he writes about Jesus, "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God" (v.17), and in chapter three he goes on to write, "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the

apostle and high priest whom we confess" (v. 1).

Hebrews 4:14-16 contains two exhortations: "let us hold firmly to the faith we profess" (v. 14) and "let us then approach the throne of grace" (v. 16). It also contains the author's reflections on Jesus' high priesthood, which serves as the basis for these exhortations. "It is because Jesus is our high priest that we can hold firmly to the faith and approach the throne of grace with confidence" (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 173).

The writer tells us a number of things about our high priest, a number of things that account for his greatness. First, he "has gone through the heavens" (v. 14). On the Day of Atonement Aaron, the high priest, entered the Most Holy Place (Lev 16:1-25) to offer a sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of his people. Jesus, however, has entered the very presence of God to present his superior sacrifice for our sins (cf. 8:2; 9:11, 23-24). Since he was sinless, unlike Aaron, he needed to offer no sacrifice for his own sins. Second, he is the "Son of God" (v. 14). In chapter five, the writer tells us what God has said about him. "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father,'" and "'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'" (v. 5). Third, he is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses" because he "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (v. 15). He understands what we go through because he has gone through the same kinds of things. In other words, he has an unequalled capacity for sympathizing with us in all the dangers and sorrows and trials which come our way in life because he himself by virtue of his likeness to us faced all these experiences. What's more, fourth, he "was without sin" (v. 15) even though he bore a greater weight of temptation than anyone ever has. As one writer observes, "Satan exerts only that pressure necessary to conform us to his will. It is not necessary for him to exert the full weight of temptation on us—for in our weakness, we submit. But Satan exerted on Christ the full weight of his ability to tempt, and yet could not cause Him to submit. Hence Christ bore a greater weight of testing than any man has known" (Pentecost, 89, 90).

The writer also tells us the purpose for his

second exhortation (v. 16b). "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence," he says, "so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (v. 16). Help in a time of spiritual need is available to us from our gracious God and high priest. We can receive mercy when we fail, and we can find the help we need strength to persevere. No trial is too great,

no temptation is too strong, but that Jesus Christ can give us the mercy and grace that we need, right when we need it. The demand to draw near to him is an appeal to recognize the importance of prayer in the rhythm of the Christian life, for "prayer creates a sanctuary in time when one may not be available in space" (Lane, 123).

The Message of the Passage

When tempted to compromise your Christian confession, go boldly to your great high priest from whom you will receive mercy and strength to persevere.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 14 **therefore** Gk. *oun*. Lit., "having, therefore, a great high priest," or "seeing, then, we have a great high priest" (NKJV). The term likely refers back to the previous discussion regarding Jesus as high priest in 2:17-3:1- perhaps more broadly in 3:1-4:13, or more narrowly 3:12-13 (see Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2 vol. reprint ed., 1:217, 18). The participle "having a great high priest" is likely causal; cf., "since, then, we have a great high priest" (NRSV).

v. 14 **great** "His greatness is expressed in the language of transcendence. He has passed through the heavens to the presence of God (cf. 9:24)" (Lane, 103). "The present passage (4:14-16) focuses in part on the ministry of Jesus in which he entered the heavenly Most Holy Place to present his superior offering (cf. 8:2; 9:11, 23-24)" (Guthrie, 175).

v. 14 **through the** . . . I.e., "into heaven;" cf., "has entered heaven" (NLT); "has gone into the very presence of God" (GNT). "The central idea of [*dieleluthota*] is 'passed through.' As the high priest passes through the holy place into the most holy place to stand before the divine presence on the Day of Atonement, Jesus has passed through the heavens to the divine presence. Unfortunately, 'passed through the heavens' does not convey this idea in English" (Lane, 94). "What is emphasized here is His transcendence; He is 'made higher than the heavens', as we are told later in the epistle (Cf. 7:26), or as it is put in Eph. 4:10, he 'ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things'. It is because He has been so highly exalted that He is such a 'great' high priest" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 85).

v. 14 **faith we profess** I.e., "our confession" (ESV, NRSV, NKJV); "our profession of faith" (NJB); "the faith we profess" (GNT). The Gk. term [*homologia*] "has reference to a specific formulation of faith that had once been accepted and openly acknowledged by the members of the community" (Lane, 104).

v. 15 **weakness** "The word translated 'weakness' (*astheneia*) can refer to sickness, physical weakness, general weakness related to being in the flesh, or moral weakness. Here the context associates the weakness with a propensity to sin (cf. 5:2-3). Not that Jesus shared in our experience of sin—the author makes it clear he did not—but he did share in our experience of being tempted, a difficult aspect of life that too often leads to sin" (Guthrie, 173).

v. 15 **just as** Lit., "according to our likeness." The Gk. terms [*kath' homoioteta*] may mean 'in the same way as we are tempted' or 'by reason of his likeness to us'; both are true" (Leon Morris, "Hebrews" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:46). It is more frequently rendered the first way (cf., NIV, the NET Bible, NJB, NRSV, NKJV), less frequently the second way (cf., "one who, because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way, only without sin" [NEB]).

v. 15 **without sin** Lit., "apart from sin." "This may mean that Jesus was tempted just as we are except that we sin and he did not. But it may also mean that he had a knowledge of every kind of temptation except that which comes from actually having sinned. There are supporters for each interpretation. But it may be that the writer was not trying to differentiate between the two" (46). "This ['apart from sin'] is appended, not to ['in all things'], but to ['according to our likeness'], to imply not merely that temptation produced no sin in our Lord, but also that it found in Him no sin" (Delitzsch, 221). "Apart from sin" does not mean that our Lord experienced every kind of human temptation except temptation to sin. "Like the Israelites in Moses' day, he too had His day of trial in the wilderness, and any compromise with the tempter's suggestions, any inclination to put God to the test, would have been as certainly sin as His refusal to countenance these suggestions or abate one iota of His confidence in His Father meant spiritual victory—victory for Himself and also for His people" (Bruce, 86).

v. 16 **throne of grace** Some take this as a reference to God's throne transformed from a throne of judgment to a throne of grace by the work of our High Priest. One observes, "The rabbis sometimes speak of a 'throne of mercy' to which God goes from 'the throne of judgment' when he spares people (Lev R 29. 3, 6, 9, 10). The idea here is not dissimilar" (Morris, 46). Some take it as a reference to Christ's throne. Another writes, "We may come freely to the throne of grace. His throne, which would have been a throne of judgment, has been transformed into a throne from which grace flows like a river" (Pentecost, 90). In either case, the benefit is the same.

v. 16 **mercy** I.e., "the outward demonstration of pity, a sympathy that expresses itself in helping a person in need instead of remaining completely passive" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, **word**focus on "mercy," 2083).

v. 16 **grace** "Grace may be used in two senses. There is the grace that characterizes God in His dealing with sinners and with His children, because of the work of Jesus Christ. But there is also that grace that provides divine enablement to meet any need. Both these ideas of grace are used in this verse" (Pentecost, 90).

v. 16 **time of need** C.f., "There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it" (GNT).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There is a story about a farmer whose pedigreed dog had puppies. As he put up a "for sale" sign in his yard a little boy approached him. "How much for one of your puppies?" the little boy asked. The farmer said, "These puppies are special. They come from a prize-winning dog. I expect to get quite a lot of money from these puppies." "I don't have much money, but can I see them?" inquired the boy. "Sure," said the farmer and he whistled for his dog. The momma dog and four spunky puppies appeared from around the corner. A few seconds later a smaller puppy waddled to join them. "How much is that puppy?" the boy asked. "You don't want that puppy. He was born crippled and will never run or play." The little boy held up his pant leg to reveal a metal brace supporting his withered leg. "I don't run well myself and he may need someone who understands." Our Great High Priest is not flawed in any way but He gets us. Our text tells us that He has been tempted in every way we are and He never sinned. Have you been rejected by people? So has Jesus. Have you been betrayed? Him too. Have you ever questioned God about your circumstance and asked Him to change it? Jesus did. Our Savior understands every trial and temptation we face and is willing and able to give us the mercy and grace we need to endure.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Heb 4:14-16

1. Why can Jesus sympathize with us when we are tempted?
2. How should we approach the throne (God)?
3. What does God give us in our time of need?

What Do You Think

In the Old Testament, a high priest was a man who was appointed on behalf of the people to offer gifts and sacrifices to God for sins. Why do you think Jesus is called "our Great High Priest"?

What R U Going To Do

God wants you to bring every temptation to Him and let Him help you endure it. Keep a temptation journal this week. Each time you are tempted to sin, write it down and then pray and ask God to help you have victory. You will have much to celebrate this week as you hold firm and honor God!

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

John 1:4 - *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

KIDPIX COUPON

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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