

Hebrews 4:14 - 16

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[0 : 00] Now, the book of Hebrews is preeminently about Jesus Christ. From the very opening verses of this phenomenal epistle, the author places the spotlight on the person and the work of Jesus.

And one of the most distinguishing aspects of this book is its emphasis upon the priesthood of Christ. That is to say that as our high priest, Jesus has paid the penalty of our sin and paved the way to the throne of God.

And one of the most famous accounts of the priesthood of Christ in this glorious book is found in Hebrews 4, verses 14-16.

And in these verses, we are given a prescription for gospel boldness. This is to say that in Christ, we can dare to be bold.

We can boldly approach the throne of God that we might receive grace and mercy in our time of need.

[1 : 21] And so this morning, I want us to look briefly at this text under three headings. First of all, in verse 14, we see that our confession is anchored in the supremacy of Christ as our high priest.

Secondly, we see in verse 15 that our comfort is anchored in the sympathy of Christ as our high priest. And then thirdly, we see in verse 16 that our confidence is anchored in the sufficiency of Christ as our high priest.

So first of all, in verse 14, we see that our confession is anchored in the supremacy of Christ as our high priest. Let's read that verse again. 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.

Now here in verse 14, the author anchors our Christian confession in the supremacy of Christ as our great high priest. In other words, our faith is rooted.

It is anchored in the past and present priestly work of Jesus on our behalf before Almighty God.

[2 : 41] Now, as we said earlier, the subject of the priesthood of Christ is introduced for us back in chapter 2, verse 17. And let's look at that briefly. And the author says this, chapter 2, verse 17.

For this reason, He, that is Jesus, had to be made like His brothers in every way. Now, why did He have to be made like His brothers? Why did He have to become incarnate?

Why did He have to come into this world? In order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God.

And so one reason that Jesus had to become flesh, He had to live on this planet, He had to become incarnate, was to be a high priest. Now, why did He have to be a high priest?

We continue reading. That He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

[3 : 39] Therefore, holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle. That is the one who is sent from God to men.

And the high priest, that is the one who represents men before God, whom we confess. And then He stops this idea of confession and He picks it up again in chapter 4, verse 14.

And so as our high priest, we put the two texts together. And that we see not only did Jesus die for us, but He currently represents us before God.

And so on the basis of the past and the present work of Christ, the author concludes in chapter 4, verse 14. Let us hold fast to our confession. But what is the connection then between having Christ as our great and glorious high priest and holding fast to our confession?

How do these two things go together? What is He talking about? Well, to answer that, let's look more closely at verse 14. Here the author says, Since we have a great high priest, Jesus, the Son of God.

[4 : 50] We must understand this morning that Christ is no ordinary, run-of-the-mill high priest. But He is supreme over all priests, for He alone is qualified to usher us before Almighty God.

He is Jesus, the One who became flesh to save His people from their sins. And He is God, the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity.

He is 100% man and He is 100% God. He is the only and exclusive mediator between God and man. Therefore, only He can reconcile men to God.

Only He can bridge the infinite gulf that exists between us as sinners and God who is holy. Only He can bridge that infinite gap that exists between us and God.

Only He can serve as high priest in service to God and make propitiation for our sins. Only He is qualified as a priest to feel the entire weight of the wrath of God upon Him.

[6 : 04] Only He is qualified to serve as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. No other priest could pay for that price.

No other priest could do what Jesus could do. No other priest could take us by the hands and bring us before the presence of Almighty God.

And for these reasons and more, Jesus is no ordinary high priest. He is supreme over every priest.

He is our great and grand high priest.

He is Jesus, the Son of God. But not only do we see the supremacy of Christ as our high priest and that only He is qualified to bring us before God.

The text also says in verse 14, we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens. This is to say that on the basis of Christ's past atoning work, His present priestly work is established.

[7 : 06] Unlike the Aaronic priesthood of the tribe of Levi, who could only go into the Holy of Holies in the temple and tabernacle once a year, and who not only had to offer sacrifices for the sins of Israel, but had to offer sacrifices for their own sins.

Unlike that Aaronic priesthood, Jesus does not have limited access to the throne of God. In fact, after He died upon the cross, He returned to His former dwelling place to continue serving as our great high priest.

He doesn't have to go to God one time a year, but He has 24 hour access, seven days a week to the presence of Almighty God. And so the author says in Hebrews 1.3, after making purification for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Beloved, you cannot miss the force of this. That Jesus' work as our high priest did not stop at Calvary. It did not stop at the resurrection.

It did not stop at the ascension. It did not stop with His heavenly coronation. But it continues right now, even at this very moment, that we are told that He ever lives to intercede on behalf of His people.

[8 : 37] That Jesus was not only faithful in securing our redemption, but He is faithful in daily bestowing upon us the benefits of our redemption.

So if you are a Christian today, you can have the confidence in knowing that Jesus is your ultimate prayer partner. That no matter who you are, you can bring your prayers, your petitions, your concerns, and lay them at Jesus' feet.

You can cast your cares upon Him because He cares for you. And I don't know about you, but there is no one else in the entire world than I would rather have praying for me than my Creator and my Redeemer.

If you are a Christian today, Jesus is your ultimate prayer partner. He ever lives to intercede for you. He not only died for you, He prays for you.

And so on the basis of Christ's past and His present work as our High Priest, the author says in verse 14, Let us hold fast to our confession.

[9 : 51] And what is our confession? It is our faith in Christ who as our great High Priest died for us and intercedes for us. The work of Christ as our High Priest serves as the bedrock of our hope, of our faith, of our salvation, of our confession.

The certainty of your faith doesn't rest in yourself. The certainty of your faith rests in Christ.

Beloved, you need to know today, assurance is never rooted in yourself. Assurance isn't rooted in your circumstances. Assurance isn't rooted in your families or in your friends or even this church. Assurance ultimately is rooted in Christ, in His finished work on your behalf, on His work as your High Priest.

The certainty of our faith is based upon the certainty of His work. He is faithful to the end. He will never let you go. He will never forsake you.

[11 : 02] Beloved, anchor your faith, anchor your confession, not in yourselves, not in your families, not in your tradition, not in your free church, but in Christ.

If you are outside of Christ, you have no standing before God. But if you are in Christ, your standing before God is absolutely secure.

So first of all, we see in this text that our confession as Christians is anchored exclusively in the supremacy of Christ as our High Priest.

But secondly, we see in verse 15 that our comfort is anchored in the sympathy of Christ as our High Priest. And this is a beautiful, beautiful verse.

Verse 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 without sin.

[12 : 05] Isn't that beautiful? You see, we must not get the wrong idea about the priesthood of Christ. Though Jesus is this great and grand and glorious High Priest, He is not beyond our reach.

He is not removed from the lives of the people He represents. Yes, He is supreme, but He is also sympathetic.

And if you consider for a moment, you've got this, you have a big, you've got a buff, and you've got a burly man. And He has His newborn baby in His arms.

And this man is both tough, but He is also tender. And likewise, Jesus is a heavenly High Priest, but He is a humble High Priest.

He is a supreme High Priest, but He is a sympathetic High Priest. And we see this in at least two ways in verse 15. We see that He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, and we see that He is tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin.

[13 : 17] So we read in verse 15, We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. Jesus is not an unsympathetic Priest because He knows our frailty and our feebleness.

Jesus is not aloof. He is not distant. He is not removed from your life and mine. On the contrary, Jesus knows our pains.

Jesus knows our difficulties. He knows what it's like to live on this planet. He knows the fellowship of friends.

He knows the joy of family. He knows the sting of being portrayed. He knows the gut-wrenching, debilitating pain of the loss of a loved one.

He knows what it's like to be hungry. He knows what it's like to be thirsty. He knows what it's like not to have a home, to be betrayed, to be alone.

[14 : 30] He knows exactly what you're going through. You don't have to doubt that. He knows the struggles of living in this world because He did.

Two thousand years ago, His feet touched the dirt in Jerusalem. He lived here. He experienced the very same things that you do.

So because of that, Jesus is a sympathetic priest. Don't you dare think for a moment that just because Jesus is this glorious, heavenly High Priest, that He doesn't know your pain.

Because the text is clear, Jesus is a sympathetic priest because He knows our weaknesses. But the text doesn't stop there, does it?

It gets even better. There's even more comfort to be found. Because we read in verse 15, 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 without sin.

[15 : 54] Jesus is not an unsympathetic priest because He was tempted in every way, every single way, just as we are, yet without sin.

Beloved, you need to notice that ever important qualifier, yet without sin. You need to underline it. You need to highlight it.

You need to engrave it upon your heart because your life hangs on that qualifier. Your hope hangs on that. Because unlike us, Jesus did not falter when tempted with Satan.

Satan by Satan. He did not succumb to the wiles of the devil. He was not allured by the deceitfulness of sin. Unlike Adam in the garden so long ago, when Adam gave in to the temptations of the evil one, and he gave in to the lust of the flesh and the lust of sight and the pride of life, and he capitulated to the commands of God, and he gave in to the evil one.

Unlike Adam. Unlike us. Unlike you. Unlike me. Jesus said no.

[17:23] When we would have said yes to sin. And it's no small significance that when Jesus was in the wilderness, that Satan came to Him and He tempted Him to turn stone into bread and to give in to the lust of the flesh.

He tempted Him to indulge in the riches of the world that were rightfully His and to give in to the lust of sight.

And He tempted Jesus to call forth angels to do His bidding and give in to the pride of life. And Jesus said no.

I'm not going to do it. And He resisted when we would have given in. And because of that, He knows sin in a way that you and I will never do because we give in.

We fall into temptation when He did not. And so no matter what you have done, there is no sin too big for Christ.

[18:34] Don't think, my friends, that somehow you've got to be righteous enough, perfect enough, holy enough to be a Christian and to come to Jesus. No!

He takes sinners like you and me. And there is no one in the world more qualified to deal with sin because He was without sin.

And He is able to understand us in a way that we don't even understand ourselves because He resisted and we would have given in. So no matter what you have done, beloved, there is forgiveness in Christ.

There is victory in Jesus. You can have victory over your sin. And He is qualified to represent you and to minister to you and to save you.

So second of all, we see in this text that Jesus alone is qualified to give us comfort, to give us sympathy, because He, unlike us, never wavered and is without sin.

[19:38] But lastly and thirdly, in verse 16, we see that our confidence is anchored in the sufficiency of Christ as our High Priest. 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.

Now our text reaches a climax with this extraordinary exhortation, let us then approach the throne of God with confidence or with boldness.

Now this verse is truly, truly staggering. Because if you know anything at all about the history of the Bible, those who have ever had the audacity to barge into the presence of God on their own terms and to come into His Holy of Holies and demand that He bless them, have all found themselves dead and under His fierce wrath and just condemnation.

You can ask Uzzah or Uzziah, Nadab and Abihu, or even in the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira. Because you see, sin and holiness never, ever, ever mix.

Those who have ever dared to barge into the presence of God have found themselves dead. And what does this verse say? Let us then with boldness, with confidence, approach the throne of God.

[21:19] Let that sink in for a moment. See, my friends, this is a Nektomen Consume Batur text.

This is your motto as a free church. In Christ, you can dare to be bold. You can go into the presence of a consuming fire and you will not be consumed.

Amazing, isn't it? In Christ, we can dare to be bold. Now, imagine for a moment that after service, you got into your car and you drove south.

And you just kept driving and kept driving and kept driving until you arrived in London. Stayed there the night. First thing tomorrow morning, you get in your car, you drive by Parliament, drive by Westminster Abbey, pull up to Buckingham Palace and just keep driving and you barge into Buckingham Palace and you demand to see the Queen.

Now, I don't know. I'm an American. But I suspect if you did that, you would quickly find yourself under Her Majesty's forces.

[22:40] But if you had a personal invitation from the Queen herself, I suspect your way would be free and clear. And this morning, Jesus is giving you a far greater invitation.

He isn't giving you an invitation to the Queen or to the President or to the White House or to a palace. He is giving you an invitation to the throne of God.

And that on the basis of the past and the present work of Christ, you can dare to be bold. You can go into the presence of a consuming fire and not be consumed.

You can go before God and not receive judgment which you deserve. But grace. Not wrath.

But mercy. You can go to God and you can sit at His throne right at His feet where there is a reservoir of grace and mercy to help you, to help me deal with our sin, deal with our struggles, deal with our pain, deal with our difficulty.

[23 : 59] There is a balm for our souls. There is solace for our aching pains at the foot of the throne of God.

And in Christ we can dare to be confident and audacious and go to God and expect not to receive judgment which we deserve, but mercy.

Not wrath, but grace. It's awesome. And there is no place better to be right now or in the entire world than to be at the foot of the throne of God.

So as we draw our study to a conclusion, I want to make three final remarks. First of all, a word regarding the assurance of your salvation.

The certainty of your confession in Christ rests completely upon the faithfulness of His work as High Priest, not upon your faithfulness, period.

[25 : 11] You are saved by His works, not ours, not yours. Likewise, our assurance is based upon His work, not ours.

This morning, are you wrestling with your standing before Almighty God? Do you seriously struggle with the assurance of your salvation?

With doubt of whether or not God loves you or cares for you or accepts you? If you do, the answer is to look to Christ in His past and His present work as your High Priest.

He is your security. He is your surety. He is the answer to your assurance. But secondly, a word regarding indwelling sin.

No matter what sin you have committed, there is forgiveness in Christ. Rape, murder, lying, greed, lust, envy, pride, what is it?

[26 : 32] What is your sin? What is that sin that you don't want anyone to know about? Beloved, that sin is not too big for Christ.

There is forgiveness for you. No matter what you have committed, Christ can take care of it. Do not let sin linger in your heart.

Because there is none more qualified to deal with your sin. Because He alone is without sin. And not only that, He paid the penalty for your sin.

And so do not let sin fester within your heart. But take it to Christ before it takes over you. Kill sin before it kills you.

Take it to Christ. He is without sin and He paid for that sin. He can forgive you. But lastly and thirdly, a word regarding your standing before Almighty God.

[27 : 39] There is not one of us in this room or in the entire world that will not stand before Almighty God. And the question for you today, for all of us, is do we have Christ as our High Priest or don't we?

Will we go before God and stand before His throne outside of Christ and face the unmitigated and unmediated wrath of God that we deserve?

Will we be in Christ on the basis of His work and face the unending mercies of God?

That's the question. Will you be in Christ or outside of Christ? Will you have Him as your High Priest or not?

May God grant all of us the grace to be able to boldly approach the throne of God that we might receive mercy and not judgment in our time of need.

[28 : 49] Amen. Let's pray. Amen.