

**Passage:** Hebrews 4:14-16

**Title:** Does Prayer Really Matter?

**Summary:** In our passage today the believer in Christ is called, invited, to come before the Lord and “ask” for help in time of need. I think we have all asked, does prayer really matter, do my prayers really change anything, and the is yes because first and foremost prayer changes us, and then secondly prayer invites God to come into the situation, and move in the situation. Reminder as we have been studying, “belief” is believing God is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. Prayer is the starting place of mixing the Word and Faith (Hebrews 4:2).

*Hebrews 4:1–2 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

*Hebrews 4:14–16 (NKJV) <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Outline: Does Prayer Really Matter (Hebrews 4:14-16)

- Prayer is in a Place – The Throne of Grace (4:14)
- Prayer is with a Person – Who has Been Where We are At (4:15)
- Prayer is a Promise – We Will Find Help in Our Time of Need (4:16)

### Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) <sup>12</sup> For 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.*

### **In Every Study**

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

*Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

### Prayer is in a Place – The Throne of Grace (4:14)

**(Hebrews 4:14 NKJV) 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.**

Having come to the end of his warning which began in 3:7, the inspired writer applied its challenge to the theme of the superiority of Jesus the Son as it is displayed in His high-priestly ministry. He is not an ordinary, run-of-the-mill high priest. He is “great” because He is the Son, exalted and sitting at the Father’s right hand until He returns victorious over all of His enemies to establish His eternal rest.

Here there is a foreshadowing of an argument that will be stated explicitly later on (9:11, 24; 10:20): Jesus did not pass through the cloth veil of the temple into a sanctuary built by men; indeed, He has entered into God’s heavenly sanctuary and is seated there until His return. In light of these facts, Christians must hold on to their profession of faith in Him unto the very end in spite of all the trials that surround them. He is Jesus—our Deliverer.

One of the central components of Jewish religion was its system of priests and Levites. Of the 12 tribes, an entire tribe was devoted to attend to the nation’s relationship with God. The tribe of Levi’s sole occupation was to intercede for the people with God. And this gave the Hebrews confidence. When they sinned, they had a contact who would go to bat for them. And of all the priests, the one with the most

clout was the High Priest. Once a year he entered the holiest room in the Temple to pay off the nation's sin.

Yet as believers in Jesus these Hebrews had turned their back on the priesthood. To the shock of parents and friends they'd thrown away this confidence. They were being asked, "If you no longer reverence the priesthood how do you expect to gain access to God?" Well, according to verse 14 the Hebrews still had a priest - and not a High Priest, but "a great High Priest." Jesus entered, not just the earthly Temple, but Heaven itself. These Hebrews had not lost their confidence at all. They'd gained a greater confidence!

These believers being drawn back into Judaism, religion, and not taking advantage of "the greatness" that has been afforded them. They want to go back to a prayer meeting, prayer avenue, that is here on earth rather than the prayer meeting that is in heaven, by He who lives to intercede for us. **I think we as believers can make the same mistake as we bring prayer down into earth, and don't realize/forget, that prayer is a place, it is at the THRONE ROOM OF GOD, and we are invited in to find help in time of need.** Considering that prayer is at the throne of God, surely we can know that prayer matters because the location of where prayer happens. Do you want power in your prayer life, it is dependent on attitude that it matters, and the attitude will be affected by the altitude (how high we go when we enter into prayer) – WOW I am invited into the throne room of God....

*Hebrews 7:23–25 (NKJV)* <sup>23</sup> Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. <sup>24</sup> But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

#### **Prayer is with a Person – Who has Been Where We are At (4:15)**

**(Hebrews 4:15 NKJV) 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.**

The reason Christians must cling to their profession of Jesus as their Messiah and God is given here. He is one with us. He became a man and is, therefore, able to understand human frailties and weaknesses. The word "infirmities" (astheneiais) includes both moral and physical weaknesses. The verb used (sumpathēsai) indicates that Jesus is able to empathize with believers because He has experienced the limitations and feelings that are common to all humans.

Furthermore, although He never succumbed to any temptation and never sinned, He was subjected to the full gamut of temptations to evil. This means that He was tested and tried but that He never committed a sin or was enticed by evil in His mind to the extent that He approved of it. He understands the power of temptation, and He also knows the stratagems by which it is successfully resisted.

For years entertainer Bob Hope led trips to Vietnam to humor the troops. Once, reminiscing on his USO shows he made the statement, "All I ever saw was those kids laughing and applauding. I never knew what they were going through until I saw a couple of movies like 'Platoon' and 'Hamburger Hill'! What courage they had - and fighting a war we wouldn't let them win."

Unlike Hope's visits to Vietnam, when Jesus visited earth He didn't just stay on stage and entertain. He invaded the jungle - got into the trenches. He was subjected to the Napalm and sniper fire. He fought the battle as one of the troops, and prevailed - without sin.

Here we're told, Jesus was tempted "in all points" as we are. Jesus was a man (human), and vulnerable to the temptations of all men. Yet He never caved in! He was tempted with everything Satan has ever thrown at you or me, yet He never succumbed. He was born sinless, and stayed sinless, and as a result He is perfectly suited to help us win our struggle for purity.

I've met people who question Jesus's empathy. If the Son of God never sinned, how can He truly understand what I face...the lure of darkness, and the pull of sin? C.S. Lewis answers this question, "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. You find out the strength of an army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives into temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been

like an hour later... We never find out the strength of an evil impulse... 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 (extent) what temptation means.”

Jesus knows a lot more than we think.

The fact Jesus didn't break enabled Him to endure all Satan could muster. We whimper and quibble, “nobody knows what I'm going through...” Oh, yes they do! Consider Jesus! Your temptation is kid's stuff compared to what our Lord endured. He knows your struggle and how you can win the victory.

And here is a missed point of prayer, and we can so easily miss it. Jesus knew how to have victory over sin and temptation.

The prayer Jesus taught the disciples (short only some 66 words – so we see prayer doesn't have to be endless words, just precise strikes with the word).

*Matthew 6:9–13 (NKJV)* <sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

But point to be made, “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”. Jesus can do that because He has been there, maybe better said been here, and He overcame and was victorious, and can show us how to be victorious too.

We can read the Bible, but we should be praying the Bible as well. Last week's study we discussed on how to have rest, enter into rest, through Jesus. We studied putting the “Word to Work” for ourselves.

*Hebrews 4:11–13 (NKJV)* <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. <sup>12</sup> For 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.

People say how cool it would be to handle serpents, to which I say yes, and the serpent I want to trample on are the serpents that are trying bite me and diminish me from being all that the Lord desires me to be. I want to take the Word of God, and say based on You have been here and been victorious, then so too will I, and I will do it through you in this Word mixed with faith, in/at the throne room of prayer.

*Mark 16:15–18 (NKJV)* <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. <sup>16</sup> He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup> And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup> they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

*Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)* <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We need to take the Word of God, and let it examine us, cut us like a knife when and where need be, so it can do Holy surgery on us. As I pray for a victory to overcome whatever it may be that is tempting me to sin (anger, lust, selfishness, unloving, drunkardness, and the likes).

*Galatians 5:19–21 (NKJV)* <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Word of God is not legalism but revelation, it reveals to me what needs to be cutdown, cutout, removed from my life.

Which let me make this point, even though we are talking about prayer, there is a great doctrinal statement being made here in this verse 15, Jesus can sympathize, and He can deliver. Verse 21 of Galatians is very clear, those who practice such things (habitually and unrepentant) will not inherit the kingdom of God. We will be covering in this Book the great debate of once saved always saved, and people living in unrepentant sin say once saved always saved, to which our two verses discussing here

before us says..... you not, you are not saved and you need to repent of your sin and call upon Jesus to save you from your sin.

But back to deliverance from sin, overcoming temptation, the Word mixed with faith, believing it after seeing it (revelation), and saying I see it Lord, not deliver me from it. I believe You are who You say You are, and can do what You say You will do; that is FAITH!

I love Psalm 107 speaking of the word, it says that it heals..... after man rebelled against it.

*Psalm 107:10–11 (NKJV)* <sup>10</sup> *Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons—* <sup>11</sup> *Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High,*

*Psalm 107:19–21 (NKJV)* <sup>19</sup> *Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses.* <sup>20</sup> *He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.* <sup>21</sup> *Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!*

I know it is hard, but He has been there, He can sympathize, therefore He can counsel us, and He can coach us, and He can say.... I know it is hard, but victory is sweet, and victory can be had.

One of the roles of the High Priest was to offer sacrifices, and Jesus we will discuss more in later chapters was both the priest and the sacrifice (there upon the cross).

But we can be living sacrifices that please the Lord.

*Romans 12:1–2 (NKJV)* <sup>1</sup> *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* <sup>2</sup> *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

And when we offer ourselves, that is when the spiritual breaks forth and pours out.

*Galatians 5:22–23 (NKJV)* <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Considering that prayer is at the throne of God, surely we can know that prayer matters because the location of where prayer happens. Do you want power in your prayer life, it is dependent on attitude that it matters, and the attitude will be affected by the altitude (how high we go when we enter into prayer) – WOW I am invited into the throne room of God.... And, by Him who understands all that I/we go through, because He has been here, He has been there.

#### **Prayer is a Promise – We Will Find Help in Our Time of Need (4:16)**

**(Hebrews 4:16 NKJV) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Because the Son knows the power of sin and the means of success over temptation, believers can come to Him in prayer with confidence in His wisdom and ability to help when they are confronted with temptation. The readers of this epistle were facing the temptation to abandon their profession of faith in the face of ridicule and persecution. Most assuredly, the Son, who was abandoned by His disciples and forsaken by the Father while on the cross, understands the needs of those who are tempted to forsake Him in the hour of trial.

The word “boldly” (parrhēsiās) conveys a sense of openness, freedom, and confidence. When Christians come to God in prayer through the Son, they receive not justice, but God’s grace and mercy. This is available because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The help that is available through such prayers is timely (eukairon), that is, it exactly fits the need at the right moment.

Who do we come to? We have been building up to this for nearly four chapters, so lets go back to where we began.

**Hebrews 1:1–4 (NKJV)** <sup>1</sup> *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,* <sup>2</sup> *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;* <sup>3</sup> *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged*

our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Listed here in these two verses are 7 Characteristics of Jesus Christ:

- He is Heir of all things: v2
- He is the Creator of all things: v2
- He is the Brightness of His Glory: v3
- He is the Expressed Image of God: v3
- He Holds all things together with His word: v3
- He is the Purifier of our sins: v3
- He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high: v3

Which reminds me of the mighty passage and promise of Isaiah 9:6.

**Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)**<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Listed here in these two verses are 7 Characteristics of Jesus Christ:

- He is Heir of all things: v2  
Everlasting Father (Jesus is the Father and all things are His)
- He is the Creator of all things: v2  
Mighty God (it took a Mighty God to create all things)
- He is the Brightness of His Glory: v3  
Wonderful (wonderful means full of wonder - God of Wonders)
- He is the Expressed Image of God: v3  
Child is Born (Jesus expresses the heart of God - approachable)
- He Holds all things together with His word: v3  
Counselor (His Word counsels us where to buy/sell - holds us together)
- He is the Purifier of our sins: v3  
Son is Given (behold the Lamb of God who takes away sin of world)
- He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high: v3  
Government upon His Shoulders (His shoulders bears our burden)

To which verse 6 of Isaiah says He is the “Prince of Peace”, and that has been our theme of what unbelief brings, no peace and no rest, but the Word mixed with faith, brings rest (peace).

**Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)**<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**Hebrews 4:1–2 (NKJV)**<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

And He says to us to come, boldly come, and invitation to His great provision!

**Isaiah 55:1–3 (NKJV)**<sup>1</sup> “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. <sup>2</sup> Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. <sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.

### Prayer of Jabez

I am reminded of the prayer of Jabez, in 1 Chronicles 4:10. It is a short prayer, only like 32 words, and most of those words are small/short words themselves. Yet we are told that “God granted him what he requested”.

**1 Chronicles 4:10 (NKJV)**<sup>10</sup> And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” So God granted him what he requested.

Prayer

*And Jabez called on the God of Israel... 1 Chronicles 4:10 (a)*

The secret of Jabez's success wasn't due to a seminar he attended or to a book he purchased. Jabez's success was due to the fact that he was a man of prayer. James says we have not because we ask not (4:2). It's that simple. The Lord is continually asking His people to ask. "Call unto Me," He says in Jeremiah 31, "and I will show you great and mighty things which you know not." "Ask, seek, and knock that you might receive and the door might be opened unto you," Jesus said (see Matthew 7:7).

*James 4:2 (NKJV)* <sup>2</sup> *You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.*

*Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)* <sup>3</sup> *'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

*Matthew 7:7 (NKJV)* <sup>7</sup> *'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.'*

How is your prayer life? Are you experiencing success and prosperity? The pathway to prosperity is prayer. Pray. And pray more. And pray still more.

Prayer is vital. We know that. But here's the problem: Because we know it, we think we're doing it. If the stopwatch was on this past week, how much time would it show that you've actually spent in prayer? God loves you no matter whether you're praying or not. But the blessings He is waiting to pour out upon you, your ministry, your marriage, your family and your friends can only be released through prayer

Jabez overcame his adversity by calling upon the God of Israel. In other words, he prayed. Prayer is not a subject that draws a lot of attention or creates a lot of excitement. People think the answer to their problems lies in a practice or a program they've never heard of before. But the life of this one who was named "Sorrowful"—this one who had a family that looked up to him and a city named after him—is recorded in the Word because he prayed simply and effectively.

Let's look at his prayer, simple, yet powerful we know, because God granted his requests,

### Passion

*... "Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed..." 1 Chronicles 4:10 (b)*

The word, "oh," gives us a clue as to the passion of Jabez's prayer. It was said of George Whitefield, the great evangelist, that when he simply said the word, "oh," hundreds of people would repent on the spot because he spoke with such passion. I sense something of this in Jabez's prayer.

Paul says the Spirit prays through us with groanings that cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26). Sometimes the most effective prayer times we have consist of groaning. You're praying for your own situation or for that of someone else and you don't know how to pray, so you let the Spirit groan through you. That's prayer. In this, I sense a passion in Jabez's prayer that moved the hand of God.

### Purpose

*... and enlarge my coast... 1 Chronicles 4:10 (c)*

"Enlarge my coasts or borders," Jabez prayed. "Make me bigger and larger than I am presently." It is important that, as believers, we are expanding. Are your borders being expanded?

William Carey, the great missionary, said, "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God." Do something radical. Take a risk in life. Take a risk in your ministry. Take a risk in your understanding of worship and devotion. Enlarge your vision. Attempt something for the Lord so big that, unless God is in it, it's doomed to fail. Such was the heart of Jabez.

### Presence

*... and that thine hand might be with me... 1 Chronicles 4:10 (d)*

Jabez didn't just want the gifts. He wanted the Giver to be with him. This is something we need to see because so often we can say, "Lord, I need this answer to prayer." And when the answer comes, we run away.

Not Jabez. He said, "Keep Your hand upon me. I want You to be with me, directing my steps, guiding my actions." And that's a prayer the Father honors.

### Protection

... and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" 1 Chronicles 4:10 (e)

At this point in his life, Jabez understood that sin always brings sadness. Even in the age of inflation, the wages of sin remain the same: death (Romans 6:23). Realizing this, Jabez said, "Keep me from sin lest it grieve me and bring sorrow into my life."

As we read in verse 10, God granted Jabez his request. Jabez was blessed, or enlarged. He experienced both the presence and the protection of God.

If we truly believed that the prayer of Jabez had practical application to our situation, we would be people of prayer. But we don't really believe it. Oh, we believe in God's ability to bless us. But we doubt His willingness to do so. Most of us have an entirely wrong understanding of the nature of our Father. We know He's wealthy, but we think He's stingy.

There are three types of wealthy people.

1. The first is the one who will give money if your presentation for cancer research is good enough.
2. The second type is one who is happy to give regardless of the cause.
3. But the third type doesn't wait for the knock on the door. Instead, he walks around, looking for opportunities to give.

Most of us believe our Father is in the first category, that God is wealthy, but that we have to plead and beg to persuade Him that our cause is worthy of His blessing. Some might even think He's eager to give to us regardless of the worth of our request. But, in reality, our Father is neither of these types. He is the third type, going to and fro throughout the whole world, looking for a man in whom He can show Himself strong (2 Chronicles 16:9). God is looking for Jabez who have problems, who have difficulty, but who call out to Him.

*2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV) <sup>9</sup> For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."*

Jabez's prayer wasn't long. But he did what you and I need to do. He called upon the God of Israel. In brokenness and openness, he poured out his heart and said, "Lord, bless me." And the Lord granted him his request. Precious people, spend time with your Father in the posture of prayer, and you'll be on the pathway to prosperity. I guarantee it because the Word declares it.

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### Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) <sup>12</sup> For 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.*

### **In Every Study**

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- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

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