



Hebrews 4:14-16
Come Boldly

Summary: Hold on to your faith, hold on to Jesus, and come boldly to the throne of grace, even when life is hard.

This Sunday is the beginning of Advent, the season when Christians turn our hearts and minds to remember the moment in time when Jesus came to earth – when divinity was wrapped in a diaper. This cosmic collision of identities is central to the faith. We believe that Jesus was fully God *and* fully man *at the same time* – we believe the God who made Mary was also held in Mary’s arms.

This is something Christians of all denominations have accepted from the very beginning. And while we’re not going to talk specifically about Christmas today, we are going to talk about why it matters. We’re going to talk about why it matters that Jesus is fully God and fully man, and the difference it makes in our lives. We’ll see that as God He can save us, as man He can sympathize with us, and so we are encouraged to **hold** onto our faith as He holds on to us, especially when life is difficult.

Read with me:

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, again, I know we’re starting to look forward to the joy of Christmas, but notice: hard times are assumed to be part of life, even for Christians. In just these three verses we find mention of weakness, times of need, and temptation. This is the reality of the world we live in; this is what authentic Christian living is like. In fact, some of us can identify with this list of needs before we even finish our morning coffee. So, Christian, do not be surprised when life is hard.

Instead, we are encouraged to patiently endure. Throughout our reading in Hebrews, we’ve been told to be diligent, to hold fast, and not to drift, we’ve been exhorted to keep going, which is important, because sometimes, when you go through a hard season of life, there’s an additional temptation poured out on top of everything else – the temptation to let go of your faith as well. To grow cold spiritually, to pull back from coming to church or home group. To stop reading Scripture and praying. Maybe you even get upset with God because after all, He let this happen. He let your life get this hard. And just at the moment when you need to be pressing in, you start pulling back.

I think it's easy for us to imagine God is with us or watching over us when things are going well. When doors are opening for us, when life is going our way, when things are falling into place. But here we're told to [hold onto our confession](#) when we're confronted with weakness, when we're tempted, when we need grace and mercy. We're told to hold on tightly to Jesus in our [time of need](#). And I just want to point out something here: *you wouldn't be told to do it if it wasn't possible*, which means Jesus is here with us *in our time of need*.

We often think and pray like God has disappeared when life is rough. We pray for God to be with people when they're going through difficult times, and look, I think we should still do that, but we need to remember, He IS with them. He is with us. We need to [hold fast our confession](#), don't let go in the dark of the things you were so sure of in the light. You know that famous line from the 23rd Psalm – [even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, your rod and Your staff they comfort me](#).

It is true the more difficult life gets, the more we tend to feel alone. God knows that temptation to drift, to pull back, to let go, that tendency, is real. And that's why we're told here in Hebrews, to [hold fast our confession](#). Hold on to the God who is holding on to you, even when life is dark and hard. *If you're there, He's there*. Remember that. And talk with Him about it. Invite Him in. Pray, "God would you please help me remember that You are here in this. You are aware of this. God help me hold on to You and trust that You are holding on to me, even in this."

When we [hold fast our confession](#), we hold on to the conviction that we cannot make ourselves right before God and that we cannot make it through this world on our own, we're confessing that we need His help. We're confessing that we need [Jesus the Son of God, our great High Priest](#).

A priest is like a spiritual defense attorney. Historically, the role of a priest has been to serve as an intermediary, to bring men to God and to bring God to men. There were a lot of priests in ancient Israel, in fact the whole tribe of Levi had been set apart to serve God this way, but only one of them was designated as the [High Priest](#).

He had a very special job. Every year, on Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement, the holiest day of the year, the [High Priest](#) would enter the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the tabernacle and later the Temple, and there He would offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. He actually had little bells on the edge of his robe so people outside could hear him moving and a rope around his ankle so that if he fell over dead, they could pull his body out. The point of it all was to convey how holy, how pure God was, how much we needed Him to make a way for us to come to Him, and how none of us could stand before Him.

So think about this: in the entire nation of Israel, there was only one High Priest and there was only one day each year when he could enter the place designated by God for His glory to dwell. That was the religious experience of the people of Israel. They understood the Holiness of God, but they also understood it was really, really, difficult to approach Him.

And yet now we have [Jesus the Son of God, our great High Priest who has passed through the heavens](#). He is not reenacting the drama each year on Yom Kippur, He has passed through *forever* and He's always looking out for those He loves. As we read in Romans:

Romans 8:34 [Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.](#)

Friends, you need to know this. Jesus is not standing in heaven monitoring your every move and judging you, keeping a list of everything you do wrong, critiquing all your choices. He is making intercession for you. He's seeking good for you. He's advocating for you. And, on the basis of His human experience, He is sympathizing with you.

Heb 4:14 [Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.](#)

See, sometimes you feel alone in life. You feel abandoned. You feel like you're the only one going through this mess. But look at this – (15) ... [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.](#)

Sympathy means to feel with, literally to suffer with, it's not just intellectual identification, it's experiential. You've felt sympathy for others, you know how just hearing bad news about someone you know or love can make your own gut wrench. Jesus feels that too. He loves us and because He came to earth in skin and spent three decades among us, He knows what our lives feel like. In his book *Gentle and Lowly*, Dane Ortland spends a whole chapter reflecting on vs 15 noting: “[not only can] Jesus relieve us from our troubles, like a doctor prescribing medicine; [but also], before any relief comes, he is with us in our troubles, like a doctor who has endured the same disease.”¹

“A doctor that has endured the same disease.” That makes all the difference in the world. When you have been through something yourself, you understand much better the struggles, the trials, and the pain, of someone else. There's actually a phenomenon noted in music called sympathetic resonance. If I have two tuning forks, and I strike this one so it begins to vibrate at a certain pitch and frequency, the other one will pick up the note and it will begin to vibrate in sympathetic response. I didn't strike that one, I only struck this one, but that one identifies with this one – that's sympathy, and that's the way the Jesus, fully God and fully man, identifies with your weakness and your temptation. He doesn't just *know* what you're going through, He *feels* it with you and for you.

And you ask, how can that be, He's God? Yes, but He was also man and he experienced the difficulties of life, relationships, and temptation. He learned to walk, learned to talk, grew

¹ Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly*, 47.

up in a family, with friends in a community, and experienced real life. Even in the gospels we read of Jesus being hungry, tired, and thirsty. God felt these very human difficulties, things you and I feel.

He had difficult relationships. He experienced conflict with His siblings, He and His family had a reputation in town due to the circumstances of His birth relative to the timing of His parents' marriage. As an adult, He was surrounded by conflict and drama everyday as the disciples bickered among themselves. And, eventually, He was betrayed by the very lips He created when Judas, one of His disciples betrayed Him with a kiss. If you're grieved by a loved one who has wandered from the faith or is estranged from you even though you feel you've done nothing wrong, Jesus knows exactly what you feel.

He also experienced temptation. No doubt, this happened throughout His life but two moments stand out in particular – His temptation by Satan in the desert and the temptation in the Garden the night He was arrested. In each case His greatest temptation was to do things another way.

We've spoken about this before as it relates to our own lives, it's the arch-temptation, it's the essence of all sin – choosing to do things your own way when God has clearly directed something else. That's what Satan offered Jesus in the desert, another way to do things. He told Jesus, if you want the world, just bow down before me, there's no need to go to the cross, there's no need to suffer, I've got another idea. But Jesus resisted the temptation to avoid suffering and chose to trust God instead.

Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the temptation was the same – He knew what was coming, He knew what was unfolding and He asked the Father, if there is any other way, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done. It was the only time in the entire record of His life that we find Him asking anyone to pray for Him – He asked the disciples and they repeatedly let Him down, falling asleep instead.

Think about that, you're facing the biggest challenge of your life, you've asked your friends for encouragement, after all, what you're doing will help them, and they don't take it seriously. You're alone. Do you feel tempted to walk away?

And yet, He pressed on even as the temptation and pressure to give up and turn away grew stronger.

In his book *Mere Christianity*, CS Lewis talks about the fact that our thinking about the power of temptation is fatally flawed and reversed. We think good people have it easy, they're just not tempted the way we are. But we're wrong. He says:

No man knows how bad he is till 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 out the strength of the German 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 in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That 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 out the 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 means—the only complete realist.

Jesus knows what it's like to walk in the dark and see no light. He knows what it's like to have a bad season drag on and on and for bad news to lead to worse, He knows what's it like to suffer pain emotionally and physically, to be mocked, to be left out, excluded, to be misunderstood. But remember, part of the reason why He experienced this suffering *was so that He might be able to identify with and help us*. So why not tap into that as you face your trials and temptations today?

After all, notice His present location and activity. He has [passed through the heavens](#) and now He sits at the right hand of God where He makes intercession for us. There is someone who knows what you're facing, who understands what you're feeling, sitting in the presence of God...and He wants you to [come](#) to Him.

The Christian faith is terribly exclusive on one hand – Jesus makes the bold and powerful claim to be [the way, the truth, and the life](#) and says [no one can come to the Father except by Him](#) (John 14:6). And yet, He is also genuinely inclusive, compelling anyone and everyone to come. Jesus may be the only door, but He offers to receive anyone who wants to enter. [16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.](#)

In the book of Revelation, on what might be the very last page of Scripture in your Bible, after everything else has been said and done, we read:

[Rev 22:17](#) **And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**

Both here in Revelation and back in Hebrews we see an invitation – come to God and receive. [Obtain mercy, find grace, take the water of life freely](#). Can you see this principle at work again: God wants to give us good. Just like He attempted with Adam and Eve in the garden, just like with the people of Israel coming out of Egypt, just like with the nation of Israel in the Promised Land, just like Jesus proclaiming the gospel in the first century – the history of humanity is the history of God offering to do us good... and of us so frequently refusing to receive it, trying other ways, or looking in other places.

Church, we are told to come, boldly, to the throne of grace and receive help in our time of need. God wants to be accessible to you, He wants to provide for you.

He sits on a throne, a symbol of power, a sign of authority, and yet it's a **throne of grace**. God doesn't expect more of you than your broken self. He is prepared to be patient with you, and to reform, heal, and strengthen you as He dispenses **mercy** and **grace**.

Think of the kinds of people that came to Jesus on earth. Political leaders like Nicodemus. Military officers like Jairus. Government contractors like Matthew. Sexually promiscuous women like Mary Magdalene. A young man trying to figure out what to do with his life, day laborers, blue-collar workers, children, the terminally ill, people struggling with their family over an inheritance, people asking deep questions about the meaning of life. All kinds of people came to Jesus, with all kinds of issues, and He received them all.

Well, today, Jesus is just as approachable in Heaven as He was on earth and we are told to come to Him, to **obtain mercy and find grace to help in [our] time of need**.

There's one last thing I want to point out here – we spoken a lot about Jesus and the work He has done, we've spoken a lot about the invitation that is extended to you, personally, individually, to come and receive **grace and mercy** from a generous God, but there's another very important thing for us notice here – and that is the plurality of the exhortation. Read the passage with me again and note the emphasis on the communal call to the whole church:

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that **we** have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let **us** hold fast **our** confession. 15 For **we** do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with **our** weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as **we** are, yet without sin. 16 Let **us** therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that **we** may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Here's what this means: you're surrounded by people going through the same things, feeling the same things, thinking the same things, tempted by the same things as you are.

The person sitting in front of you, the person sitting next to you, the person you saw in the parking lot, the person whose name you couldn't remember in the hall, the person in your small group, these things apply equally to each of them. We're in this together. And so, we're encouraged to face life together, to do life together – to come to *our* priest, hold fast to *our* confession, recognize *our* weaknesses, come *together* to the throne so that *each of us* can receive the mercy and grace *we* need.

Which means, *you're not the only one who is struggling*. You're not the only one in need of help. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have it all together. It's OK to struggle. It's OK to be confused, frustrated, tired. You're not the only one, other people feel it too. They need Jesus too. *We* need Jesus *together*.

So, let's point one another toward Him. **Let us hold fast to our confession**, together. Let's support and encourage each other. Let's pray, on the spot, with each other. Let's text each other, call each other, send voice and video messages to each other. And let us, together,

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

And then, let's share our testimonies with each other, share answered prayer with each other, let us share our time, talents, our spiritual gifts, and our material resources with each other – let's be increasingly available as an outlet through which God's grace and mercy might flow into each other's lives.

Church, we're in this together – with each other and with Jesus. Other people understand what you're going through, and Jesus is sympathetic. So hold on to your faith, hold on to Jesus, and come boldly to the throne of grace, even when life is hard.

Let's pray.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Rom 15:13



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 4:14-16 Come Boldly

Summary: Hold on to your faith, hold on to Jesus, and come boldly to the throne of grace, even when life is hard.

- How are you encouraged by the knowledge that Jesus was fully God and fully man?
 - How does that make a difference in your life and attitude toward your situation?
 - How does it make a difference in your prayer?
- For more information on Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness, review Matthew or Luke 4.
 - How did Jesus respond to each temptation?
 - How does His tactic relate to the admonition to “hold fast our confession?”
- Where are the areas in life where you find it difficult to hold fast your confession?
 - What, exactly, makes it hard?
 - How could other pray for you in this?
 - Assuming others struggle with similar issues, how might you pray for them?
- CS Lewis wrote the following in *Mere Christianity*:

No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good... Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is... A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That 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 out the 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 means—the only complete realist.

- Is this true? Does temptation get harder, or easier to resist?
- What do you imagine coming boldly to throne of grace looks like? Have you ever prayed with someone whose prayers seemed bold to you? What was that like? Does your approach in prayer ever feel bold? If not, why not?
- Review Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34.
 - Where is Jesus right now?
 - What is He doing?
 - How do you react to that?