

# Hebrews 4 (Part 3) :14-16 • The Throne of Grace

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Let's get into some Hebrews, shall we this morning? Hebrews chapter four. So, open your Bibles please there. Hebrews chapter four. These are some verses that I've been really looking forward to teaching. But, as I read through them in preparation, I thought to myself, they're so good I think I could probably just read them and then sit down.

And you guys would be it you'd be fine. I know that's not what you're looking for. So, my goal here today is just not to screw this up. I'm going to try not to mess up as I read through this and so I'm just here. Let's even pray.

Father God, open our hearts. Open our hearts to your Word, to your Spirit and Lord, help me to not mess this up. These are so powerful, such powerful words. And we need to get ahold of them, Lord, what they say. And so we just pray for your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and to fill us with insight and understanding truth. Jesus, we need to know what your word says, and I just really pray that your Spirit would be moving mightily among your people today. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Hebrews four, verse 14. We're going to read down through 16. That's the end of the chapter.

*<sup>14</sup>“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

You see what I'm up against here? Looking at these verses. They really are just incredible. The author is about to launch into a very extensive sort of a treatment of the priesthood of Jesus Christ that's going to be coming in the next chapters. And he's going to, he's going to really develop it. He's just touching on it here, but he wants to remind you and me about the priesthood of Jesus and the fact that it has, or provides for us, everything we need.

Now, he begins simply by saying there in verse 14, “*since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,*” (So that clears up who that high priest is). He says, “*let us hold fast our confession.*”

And he's going to, he's laying out here for us these reasons. Reasons why the priesthood of Jesus is all we need. And he begins by giving the importance and the sufficiency of the priesthood of Jesus by saying that He has passed through the heavens.

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? The first thing we want to ask ourselves is, what does he mean by that? And then secondly, why is it important that we understand that Jesus passed through the heavens? Well, as for what it means, the author says here, that Jesus passed through the heavens and says, in essence, that He was raised and ascended after His death and burial.

He was raised and He ascended into heaven. That's just a simple way of speaking of His ascension, but as for why, it's an important thing for us to hear. Well, this kind of would've been obvious to a Jewish audience, and that's why I feel like there's maybe a need to explain it a little bit here among Gentiles.

The Jews understood the role of the high priest because it was an everyday situation for them. The high priest was the main man. He was the leader of the worship of Israel as they would come to worship the God of heaven. And he acted as the primary mediator. The high priest was the primary mediator between God and God's people. Okay?

You're probably aware of this, but on the Day of Atonement, it was the high priest who would go into the Holy of Holies. And he only got to go into that room once a year. He would go in two times. The first time he would bring blood to cover his own sins, and then he would go out and come back in with blood that he would sprinkle over the mercy seat for the sins of all of Israel on the Day of Atonement.

But he would go there on behalf of the people. And that was, and the Jewish people knew that that's what a high priest does. He mediates. Okay? He mediates. And so, the writer goes on here to say, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. And he's essentially summing up the whole challenge to these Hebrew Christians that he's writing about, and he's saying, Jesus has taken over.

Jesus is now the high priest. Doesn't matter that he wasn't born into the house of Levi, or even of the Aaronic priesthood. But Jesus is now our high priest. Now,

again, to a Jewish audience that would've taken hold of their heart. It means that the old priesthood under the old covenant is now obsolete. In fact, he's going to make that point later on in this letter.

The previous priesthood, the Levitical priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood is now obsolete. It's done. It's over, because we have a new high priest, and our high priest has gone through the heavens. He is not going into, and again, these are things he's going to talk about later on in the letter. He doesn't go into a room that was made by man to sprinkle blood of an animal over an arc with a mercy seat that was made by man.

He goes into, he went into the heaven of heavens, the Holiness of God's presence and sprinkled His own blood on our behalf. And that of course is the beauty of what we're seeing here. But it is emphasizing for you and I that because again, in the Jewish mind, they would understand that I have to go through the high priest in order, on the day of Atonement I, he's the one I have to go through.

They would understand now that Jesus is the one who has taken over that role, and now that I have to go through. They would get that. It is through Jesus that now I can approach, and only can approach God. And in fact, the Apostle Paul said the very same thing when he wrote to Timothy, let me show you a passage from one Timothy. This is chapter two, verse five. He says:

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### **1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)**

*For there is one God, (we know that, but we also know that) and there is one mediator between God and men, (and that is) the man Christ Jesus.*

So according to first Timothy two, five, how many mediators are there between God and man? There's one. That's what he says. There's one. There's one God and there's one mediator. There aren't 2, 3, 10, a hundred or a thousand. There's one. So, if I'm going to have this issue of my sin and my life mediated before the Father, it will be done so by Jesus Christ. I have to, I'm not putting anybody down, but this is frankly one of the areas where Roman Catholicism has completely missed the point. This is one of those areas.

Because by teaching Catholics that they must confess their sins to a Roman priest, a Roman Catholic priest they are denying the fundamental truth that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, as Paul said. The only mediator, and there is no need for any other human mediation.

Now, Jesus is a human. He's also God. That's the crazy part about it. I can now go before God, in the person of Jesus Christ who is my mediator. And, of course, that takes the saints as the Roman Catholics see them, or even the Virgin Mary, out of the picture in terms of any sort of a mediatorial role. And that's not to put anybody down or certainly not to speak some kind of a slight against the Virgin Mary.

You know who did not remain a virgin, she had other children. The point is, Roman Catholics see her in a mediatorial role. Paul says there's one. There's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And then at the end of verse 14, the author just gives his conclusion to what he's already said concerning Jesus being our high priest in the heavens.

And he says, "*let us hold fast our confession.*" And I like kind of the way the NIV says this, he's they say, "*let us hold firmly to the faith that we professed*" because to hold fast, or to hold firmly, well, we all know what that means. It's the opposite of letting go. It's the opposite of releasing something. It's holding onto it.

But the confession that they're speaking of here is not just a confession of our lips, it's the confession of our heart. It's the faith that we have in Jesus and in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Let us hold fast to our faith that we have confessed in the person of Jesus Christ. Hold on tight to that faith. Because faith is what we need. Faith is the key. Faith is the key, you guys. I want to remind you of something Jesus said in the form of a question. Let me show you this from Luke chapter 18. This is an interesting question. Jesus said this:

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**Luke 18:8B (ESV)**

*"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

That's kind of a penetrating question, isn't it? He's basically saying, when I return, I wonder what I'll find. What's He looking for more than anything? He's looking for faith. People who have faith, who are trusting in what He did on the cross. That's what he's looking for more than anything.

We try to shine, spit polish our lives in such a way that you know they're going to look good, and we'll certainly impress him when he returns. He's looking for faith. Looking for people with a sound strong faith. All right. The writer goes on to explain why Jesus is the perfect high priest. Verse 15. Look with me there.

*15 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

And this is such an important verse for us to ponder and to think about because Jesus was, and in fact, is human in every respect. And so, He is able then to sympathize with everything that we go through in terms of all of our weaknesses, all of our temptations. He understands. Jesus understands because He has dealt with the weakness of human flesh. Even though being without sin, He can directly relate to what it is to be tempted, to feel tempted.

And even though He was, He never gave into that temptation. He understands what's involved on a personal level for you and I to deal with temptation and all that goes along with it. And so, we're being told here in verse 15 that when Jesus is before the Father, which I believe is always as He's there in the presence of God the Father, He's taking you.

You are there because he's also human. He represents you now. He represents you before the Father. But it's more than just it's more than just representation, like someone who's in the House of Representatives. We're talking about representing you on his heart and it's a much more intimate and personal picture.

And there's actually a snapshot of this that is given to us in the Old Testament. I want to show it to you on the screen. It's from Exodus chapter 28. Check this passage out. It goes like this. Verse 29. It says:

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**Exodus 28:29 (ESV)**

*So Aaron (and remember, he was the very first high priest) shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.*

I don't know if you've ever read that in the Book of Exodus. But this was a picture, you know, everything in the Old Testament when you read through Exodus and how they did things. It's all a picture of Jesus Christ in his high priestly work. And as Aaron was told to bear the names of the tribes of Israel on his heart as he would go in before the Lord, this is a picture of Jesus Christ taking you, with Him, into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of Almighty God as He speaks to the Father on your behalf, as he plays out that mediatorial

role, as He intercedes for you and talks about you and your needs and the things that are going on in your life.

Does it amaze you to think that Jesus might be talking to the Father about you? About what's happening in your life? It's such a beautiful picture. It's a foreshadowing of the work of our great high priest as he bears upon His heart, His bride, His people. And then we have what is given to us as essentially the conclusion in verse 16. Given all these insights and understanding, he says,

*<sup>16</sup> "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

And I got to tell you something guys. It is my considered opinion that this is one of the most powerful verses in the whole of the New Testament. I really believe that. This single verse 16, is so critical, not just for us to understand, but to really, truly embrace in light of the fact that Jesus is our great high priest. In light of the fact that He shares and understands our humanity. In light of the fact that He is mediating and bringing you and me before the Father in a sort of perpetual constancy and so forth we are told then to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence.

Do you have confidence going before God? We're told to approach His throne with confidence. We sang that song this morning and I loved it because it's very much a dovetail of what we're talking about. It's Your blood. We talked about the blood of Jesus Christ and Ken even prayed afterwards about how it's only with your blood that we can enter, and we enter with confidence because of what Jesus did on the cross.

That is what our confidence is in. As the Apostle Paul said, we put no confidence in the flesh. There's no confidence in me, what I can do, the kind of a good person I can possibly try to be. No confidence in approaching God. I don't think about how well, I've had a pretty good week. So, I think I'm probably pretty good to go as I go to pray, talk to the Father this week.

I'm feeling confident because I had a pretty, I didn't yell at anybody this week, and I don't think I had any awful thoughts, I don't think, and so I think we're okay. I think we're going to do okay. No, just none of that. He says, let us come with confidence in the fact that Jesus already bore our judgment. Jesus already bore our penalty. He was punished for us.

So now the throne of God is a place that we can approach confidently, but it's also a place where we find grace. Wow. It's amazing to me that it's called the

Throne of Grace. That's the thing that makes this passage so, beautiful. The throne of grace.

He doesn't call it the throne of judgment. It could be called the throne of judgment, but he doesn't call it that for you and me. Because Jesus bore our judgment. He doesn't call it the throne of punishment. He could, he could call it the throne of wrath. He could, but not for you and me. Because Jesus bore our wrath.

So, for you and me, it's the throne of grace. And I want to remind you that grace means unmerited favor. Now, as he's talking about this in this verse, it refers to strength and spiritual power, the favor of God to give us the power to live our lives. But it's not just grace that we find there. Look at verse 16 again.

*16" Let us then with confidence drawn near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy."*

Now this is interesting. We go to the throne of grace to receive mercy, but see, grace and mercy aren't the same thing. They're different in fact. Whereas grace is unmerited or unearned favor, mercy is not getting what we do deserve. You see?

So, if I come to God and I say, have mercy on me, what I'm saying is I deserve the worst. I deserve punishment. I deserve the hottest spot in hell, have mercy on me. And so, we come to the throne of grace, and we find mercy. And I don't think I need to tell you that mercy's pretty great. But it's especially great in light of what we just saw in our previous study of Hebrews.

Now I know for you and me it's been a couple of weeks since we did that, and that's, that's one of the problems with breaking up the Word of God and teaching it to you over a period of several weeks. We tend to compartmentalize certain aspects of the Word of God when they are not compartmentalized.

So here he is talking about the throne of grace, where you go to find mercy, but what did he say right in the verses right, right before this? We'll put it up on the screen so we can all see it together. Hebrews. Okay. Here's verses 12 and 13. This is right before we started. Remember what we read, what we dealt with last time. It said:

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### **Hebrews 4:12-13 (ESV)**

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, (And, oh boy, this is this kind of, makes you uncomfortable) and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Do you want to have your thoughts and intentions exposed? And it says) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

You guys, stay with me. This was spoken right before we get to the throne of grace. That's really important that you would see that. Right before we talk about the throne of grace, where we find mercy. We learned that the Word of God exposes, like a double-edged sword. It cuts, filets open and exposes, and reveals what's really going on in our inner lives. And it tells us in the last part of that passage that none of us can hide. We can't hide from God's scrutiny. Isn't that a wonderful thought?

You can't hide what's going on deep in your heart. Neither can I. So, what he's telling us is sin is completely and entirely exposed. Our sin. My sin is exposed. When I read the Word of God, it exposes me. And that's really never a fun sort of a situation, but it happens. So how do we typically respond when we feel exposed? When our sin is exposed? How do we usually respond?

Well, let me show you how every human being has been hardwired to respond ever since the first sin was exposed. This is great. Genesis chapter three. This is after Adam and Eve partook of the fruit. It says:

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### **Genesis 3:7-8 (ESV)**

*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

So interesting, isn't it? This is how we naturally respond to the exposure of sin. When the Word of God exposes who we are, the intent of our heart, and we lie naked before the Lord in the sense that he sees everything going on in our lives. This passage illustrates it. Well, we realize, first of all, just like they did that we're sinners and we feel shame instantly. And then what do we do?

We try to cover up our shame just like they did. And we try to make it a little bit less obvious. It might be just some quick mouthwash. Don't let anybody know. I'm not going to tell very many, anybody what's going on in my life? I'm going to cover it. I'm going to cover it up. I don't want people seeing the kind of person I am.

Good grief. So we're just not going to say anything. Don't talk about it. We don't talk about it. We don't talk about, you know how we do things in our home. What goes on in our home is private. Natural response to sin, we're just covering it up. And then lastly, we hide from God, just like they did. Oh man, I don't know. Going to church today as, Ugh I got so much to do around here, and I only get one day off a week. And it's kind of. I have, I just really got some things I need to take care of, and so just stop bugging me about it.

We'll, just I'll, yeah, don't worry. Yeah, we'll do this sometime to maybe next week. We'll see. We'll see. What's going on? I'm hiding. I'm hiding from God. I feel that shame trying to cover it, and I'm hiding from the Lord. The problem is, the Word of God tells me I can't hide, and there is no covering it up with Him. It's not possible. So you see, there's only one thing left to do and that's to go before God. So how am I going to do that? Verse 16 again,

*<sup>16</sup>“Let us then with confidence drawn near to the throne of Grace.”*

Once again. I have zero confidence in myself, so my confidence must be in Him. Jesus, you died for me. Of that, I'm sure. I am confident. And so, I now approach your throne, with that confidence that you gave your life for me, and I come to you, and I confess all these things that you've revealed in my life. And you know what? They're all true. Every single stinking one of them. They're all true.

And I confess my sins and what happens when I do that? I'm forgiven, aren't I? And I find mercy. You know one of my other favorite passages is first John one, nine.

*<sup>9</sup>“If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just. And will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

That's mercy. I find mercy. You find mercy when we go before the throne of grace. So, we say, stop running from God. Stop trying to cover up your sin and just go before the throne of grace. Jesus has already done the heavy lifting. He's already taken your sin. He's borne it on the cross. Now, don't be afraid. Come

before the throne of grace, find mercy, and then find grace, which is strength to help you in your time of need.

And I don't know about you, but my time of need is like all the time. I don't really, I mean, the older I get, the more I realize I don't have a time when I don't need Him. Or I don't need His help. It's like all the time. Well, thankfully, that grace that He gives, that power, that strength is available all the time and that's wonderful.

But I have to follow the exhortation, which is, “*let us then with confidence drawn near.*” See, that's what I have to do. That's my part. That's the responsibility on me. I have to draw near, be willing to draw near, because I'm not going to find that mercy and I'm not going to experience that grace and strength until I do that. It's like, Lord, keep me from running. Right?