
Week 11 Sermon, October 29, 2023

Hebrews 4:14-16 – *Holding Fast by Drawing Near*

Discussion Questions

1. Hebrews 4:14-10:18 forms the second of three major discourse units in the book of Hebrews. Today's text (verses 4:14-16) introduces the theological discourse on Christ as the High Priest which follows in the opening ten verses of chapter 5. Reread 4:1-13 and discuss the context that leads to this focus on Jesus as High Priest. What are the exhortations given in these verses that now focus on Jesus, our Great High Priest?
 2. Though the author of Hebrews alluded to Jesus' priestly duty in the opening of the letter (1:3), he then directly refers to Jesus as high priest in 2:17 and 3:1. In 4:14, however, Jesus is referred to as the great high priest. This word great means "to exceed a standard." How did Jesus exceed the standard of all other high priests, including Aaron? Read, talk through, and delight in Hebrews 9:12.
 3. In 4:14, we are exhorted to "hold fast our confession." Consider and discuss the implications of the fact that Jesus has passed through the heavens and is now in the presence of the Father. What hope does this bring you and how does this hope fuel your desire to hold fast to your faith (see John 6:40, 14:1-3; Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 7:25)?
 4. In 1651, Puritan Thomas Goodwin published an entire work on Hebrews 4:15 titled, "The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth." Goodwin's aim was to show believers the heart of Christ to encourage them against all that may discourage them. Temptation and sin are sure sources of discouragement in the believer's life. When temptation occurs, or when falling prey to temptation, is the natural response to run to Christ or to run away from Him? Read 4:15 and 2:18. How does the heart of our sympathizing Savior encourage you to run to Him in the midst of temptation, or when falling into sin? Consider the fact that He was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin. Ponder and discuss the implications of Jesus resisting temptation to the end (12:3-4).
 5. In 4:16, we are exhorted to draw near to Christ. This exhortation is directly tied to the fact that the heart of Jesus sympathizes—co-suffers—with us in our temptations and weaknesses. The heart of Christ welcomes us, and delights when we run to Him in time of need. His throne is described as a throne of grace—not a throne of judgment or of justice—but of grace. How does this encourage you to run to Christ quickly? Discuss practical situations where you would be tempted not to come to Christ, but remembering His throne of grace would help you draw near more quickly.
 6. Notice when God disperses His grace to us (4:16), it is in time of need. It is when we are tempted. When we are ashamed. When we feel guilty and unworthy. It is during these times that our Savior beckons us to come to Him, to receive mercy and find grace to help. Spend time in prayer thanking the Lord for His lovingkindness to you. Ask Him to help you hold fast to Him by drawing near to Him in your battle against temptation and sin.
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