

A Study of the Book of Hebrews

Jesus is Better

Sermon # 9

"Reasons to Cling to Jesus"

Hebrews 4:14-16

Mankind today has a problem. That problem is guilt. No one denies that it is a problem but differences abound as to what to do about the problem. Since sin entered the picture in the Garden of Eden man has been dealing with guilt. Man has hidden from it, drugged himself to avoid it, and rationalized it away. The popular answer of our world is to deny or dismiss the guilt.

"A man entered a bar, bought a glass of beer and then immediately threw it into the bartender's face. Quickly grabbing a napkin, he helped the bartender dry his face while he apologized with great remorse. "I'm so sorry," he said. "I have this compulsion to do this. I fight it, but I don't know what to do about it." "You had better do something about your problem," the bartender replied. "You can be sure I'll remember you and will never serve you another drink until you get help."

It was months before the man faced the bartender again. When he asked for a beer, the bartender refused. Then the man explained that he had been seeing a psychiatrist and that his problem was solved. Convinced it was now okay to serve him, the bartender poured him a drink. The man took the glass and splashed the beer into the barkeeper's astonished face. "I thought you were cured," the

shocked bartender screamed. "I am," said the man. "I still do it, but I don't feel guilty about it anymore."

[Charles Sell. Unfinished Business. (Multnomah, 1989) p. 223 - www.bible.org/illus/guilt]

Guilt is portrayed as something that is foisted upon us by our parents, the church or society as a whole. People are advised to overcome the illusion of guilt by seeking out the roots of their guilt. By discovering the psychological and emotional causes they hope to mitigate their so-called guilt. There is good news today, we have a means of dealing not only with our guilt but with the sin that causes it!

"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."

The author begins in verse fourteen by describing how Jesus is uniquely qualified to serve as our High Priest. *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...."* The High Priest of Israel entered once each year to make sacrifice for the sins of the nations. In order to enter the Holy of Holies where the blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, the High Priest had to pass through three outlying areas. He took the blood and went through the door into outer court, through another door into the Holy Place and finally through the veil into the Holy of Holies. In the Old Testament the high priest of Israel passed through

the courts and veils into the Most Holy Place. Our High Priest has "*passed through the heavens*" to the very presence of God, where He sits at God's right hand (1:3).

Jesus our High Priest after He had made the one time, perfect sacrifice for sin, passed through the heavens. We have our perfect and great High priest who once and for all, made the only sacrifice that will ever be needed for sin. Any other priest who attempts to reconcile men and God is in reality a barrier rather than a mediator.

The New Living Translation translates the last part of verse fourteen as, "*...Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him.*"

In our text today the writer gives us four good reasons to cling to Jesus.

First, We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Can Sympathize With Our Weaknesses. (v. 15a)

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses."

Although it is stated negatively it is a positive attribute that he is describing. We can dare to cling to Jesus because he is capable of unparalleled understanding and sympathy.

The King James Version translates verse fifteen as, "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*" I like that translation because of the use of the word "*touched*" by our infirmities. This is notable because under the Old Testament there were so many restrictions about what a person could and could not touch. These restrictions were even greater for the High Priest. But Jesus our High Priest, can not only sympathize with

our weakness, but He is the one who reaches out and touches us. Some time when you are reading your Bible, just make a list of all the people that Jesus touched – He touched; lepers, blind men, children, prostitutes, even tax collectors. Today, He extends His hands toward us, still offering the touch of God for all who will come to Him!

So “How Does Jesus Understand our weaknesses?” Later in Chapter five and verse two we read, *“He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.”* The writer is telling us that Jesus had a real human body with all it’s inherent weaknesses. He came as an unlearned baby and had to be taught. He had to learn to walk just like every other child. He thought and even talked like a baby before he learned to talk like an adult. He lived in a human body, mind and soul, with all their limitations except for sin!

“Dr. John Wilson told the following story Booth Tucker was conducting evangelistic meetings of the great Salvation Army Citadel in Chicago. One night, after he had preached on the sympathy of Jesus, a man came forward and asked Mr. Tucker how he could talk about a loving, understanding, sympathetic God. ‘If your wife had just died, like mine has,’ the man said, ‘and your babies were crying for their mother who would never come back you wouldn’t be saying what you’re saying.’

A few days later Mr. Tucker’s wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the Citadel for the funeral. After the service, the bereaved preacher looked down into the silent face of his wife and then turned to those who were

attending. 'The other day when I was here,' he said, 'a man told me that, if my wife had just died and my children were crying for their mother, I would not be able to say that Christ was understanding and sympathetic, or that He was sufficient for every need. If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient. My heart is broken, it is crushed, but it has a song, and Christ put it there. I want to tell that man that Jesus Christ speaks comfort to me today.' The man was there, he came and knelt beside the casket while Booth Tucker introduced him to Jesus." [John MacArthur. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary :Hebrews (Chicago; Moody Press, 1983) p. 114]

We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Can Sympathize With Our Weaknesses and ...

Second, We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Was Tempted As We Are. (v. 15b)

The second part of verse fifteen says, He "... *was in all points tempted as we are...*" His temptations were more intense because he suffered the full fury of temptation. Most of us give in and say "yes" to sin before Satan has even used all the weapons in his arsenal. Jesus said "no" to Satan as Satan hurled every weapon at his disposal. His experience with temptation was greater because he never gave in. He resisted until he broke the power of Satan.

The famous writer, C. S. Lewis wrote, "A silly notion 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 (any) 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 not 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.” [C.S. Lewis. Mere Christianity. (New York: MacMillan, 1952) pp. 124-125]

What this means is that whatever the depths or height of the temptation you face, He KNOWS about it.

We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Was Tempted As We Are And ...

Third, We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Did Not Give In To Sin (v. 15c) *"Hewas in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* This is in sharp contrast, to what Chapter five and verse three reminds us that about every other high priest in Israel that they *"must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people."* (NRSV). The lack of sin on his part made him qualified to be the substitute for our sins.

This means that we have someone as our High Priest who suffers with us, who knows how we feel and who know how hard it is at times to follow God. Because he knows the power of sin and the means of success over temptation, believers can come to Him in prayer in confidence that he will know how to help them.

We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Did Not Sin And...

Fourth, We Should Cling To Jesus Because He Invites To Come Without Fear. (v. 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!"

We can and should draw near to God when we feel the burden of guilt, and amazingly enough we are invited to do so with boldness. I must confess that I have never really been comfortable with our translation which says we are to *"come boldly to the throne of grace."* The word *"boldly"* has the thought of being brazen—there is sort of a flippancy suggested by it. But that is really not the idea. It is a very interesting word in the Greek (*parrhesia*) it is the same word rendered *"confidence"* in 3:6. We can enter into God's presence before the throne because we understand it is not a throne of judgment or condemnation but one of grace. Believers should courageously approach God in prayer because His is a *"throne of grace,"* and our High Priest sits at His right hand interceding for us.

Jesus entered human existence not just so that he could share our tears, or suffer pain so that he could identify with our experiences, but so that He could remedy them through his great compassion. God offers us help in the face of our needs, and he gives us prayer as a means to communicate those needs to him. God invites us out of our want and into his supply, out our spiritual coldness and into warm presence, out of our fear and into his love and acceptance.

The Great expositor G. Campbell Morgan wrote, *"I am never tired of pointing out that the Greek phrase translated "in time of need" is a colloquialism of which "in the nick of time" is the exact equivalent. "That we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the*

nick of time”—grace just when and where I need it. You are attacked by temptation. At the moment of assault, you look to Him, and the grace is there to help in the nick of time. There is no postponement of your petition until the evening hour of prayer. But there in the city street with the flaming temptation in front of you, turn to Christ with a cry for help, and the grace will be there in the nick of time.” [G. Campbell

Morgan. Choice Gleanings Calendar. As quoted by W. MacDonald. *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Heb 4:16). (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995)]

Conclusion

He is right here today to meet your need, whatever your need may be. If you are here today and you have never made him your High Priest, He stands ready for you to make that commitment today.

If you're here and you have struggles you just can't handle, he stands ready to come alongside you and carry your load with the invitation "come unto me all we are weary and heavy laden."

If you are here and you have temptations far beyond what you think you can bear, remember He was tempted in the same way. Whatever your need He is here!