



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Holding On With Both Hands

March 6, 2022

Hebrews 4:14-16

Clint Pressley

¹⁴ 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. 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. ¹⁶ 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.

(Pastor prays)

By God's grace we seem to have made it through the worst of a two-year struggle. And I am so incredibly thankful to my church and my family and for you and God's good provision through it all. And this morning we have landed in one of the most beautiful and theologically rich passages in the entire book of Hebrews. And I want to use this passage to center our hearts and focus our minds on the grace of God found in Jesus. No matter what you've gone through, who you've lost, or even what wrongs you have suffered, our good God has brought you through and here you are as a real product and picture of God's provision and grace.

I was standing at the gas pump on Friday thinking in my mind how terrible the gas prices are and I hear a man standing at the pump next to me quoting Romans 8. It was one of our church members who's memorizing it, he and his girlfriend. And I was instantly reminded of the kindness of God. Look, we have all been through the refiner's fire. The refiner's fire burns but it also purifies

that you and I might be closer, calmer and more dependent on our Heavenly Father. And today as we continue our regular exposition and study of Hebrews, I want to use this passage as an encouragement toward hope and a challenge for you to joyfully take up the mantle of Christianity.

Christianity means to live each day of your life as an adopted son or daughter of God, purchased by the blood of Jesus at the cross. I want you to grow in grace. I want you to live in joy. I want to sin less, trust more and quit worrying about what's going to happen in the future. I want to take confidence and gain strength in the love of God and the finished work of Christ on the cross. I don't want self-help books and trite sayings and shallow, lightweight devotions. Life is too serious and too short for that. I want you to know God like you haven't before! And I want you to experience grace.

And so for the next few minutes I want to dive into this challenge written to Christians just like us living in perilous times just like ours. There are actually two challenges here. One is to do with *doctrine* and the other is to do with *devotion*. And when we take hold with both hands, God uses every event to grow us in grace.

By Grace, God Will Strengthen You for What's Next

Let's take the two commands and split them up.

We need to be strong doctrinally

It's not enough to say that we are Christians. We need to know *what we believe* and *why we believe it*. Especially when it comes to the Lord Jesus. You can see where I get that right there in the first two verses. Let's read those together. ¹⁴ *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.* 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.*

This is all about Jesus and how we understand Him. One of the fundamental flaws in the church over the last 40 years has been *over-emphasis* on *activity* and the *under-emphasis* on *doctrine*. So we end up with a whole lot of busy people who are not really clear on what they believe.

Now the people getting this letter for the first time were right in the thick of it, and instead of a pep talk about doing better, the preacher takes two verses and plunges us into the depths of who Christ is and what He has done for us. And in the middle of this theology lesson, at the end of verse 14, he says hold fast to the confession of the faith. Take both hands and get a hold of the soul-satisfying truth about Jesus!

Allow me to point out a few of those truths. Verse 14 tells us that He is our high priest. Because we are sinful and God is holy, we need a go-between. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, As our high priest He didn't just make a sacrifice for us, He is the sacrifice. On the cross, as our substitute, He takes the judgment of God on our behalf, freeing us to live with joy and hope and forgiveness. He is our high priest.*

It's as if the author didn't feel like that was strong enough language, so he adds to the title. Verse 14 says He is our *great* high priest. His superiority, His singularity, He is not just a high priest, He is the *great high priest*. In Greek it is *mega*. Search the whole Bible from cover to cover and you will not find another person, prophet, priest or teacher that comes anywhere close. Every high priest, every animal sacrifice, every built altar serves only as a dim foreshadowing of our great high priest. Why would you not pledge your life to Him?

The preacher goes on. The third thing he says in verse 14 is, "He passed through the heavens." What does this tell us about Jesus? For one, it presupposes a resurrection from the dead. That Jesus dying on the cross in the place of sinners actually worked. That His death on the cross was not a martyrdom or heroic, but a substitution for sinners, a once-and-for-all finished

sacrifice that makes us free from sin and victorious over death. It also reminds us that He appeared to the apostles. He quenched the fears of doubting Thomas, removed the shame of denying Peter, calmed the fears of the Emmaus Road travelers, and strengthened the church to make disciples of all nations. The fact that He passed through the heavens reminds us of His ascension as Lord. It reminds us that He was not only raised from the dead but that He has ascended into the very presence of a holy God and done so as a man *for* man. When people say they are talking to the “man upstairs,” they are usually being trite. But they don’t know that they are also being truthful, because there is a man making intercession for you with the Father right now!

So hold on because He’s holding onto you. He passed through the heavens. Verse 14 also says “Jesus.” For the very first time in this letter we see the name “Jesus.” The one whose name literally means “YHWH saves.” In the first chapter of Matthew the angel told Joseph, “Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will give birth to a child, and you are to name him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.” This is here to remind us of the full and complete humanity of the Lord Jesus. He was fully man on behalf of men, the second Adam. Only a man, a real person, could stand in for real people. He was fully man and also fully God. Jesus, the son of God. The very essence and nature of God. He is the second person of the Trinity.

The creed helps us here. We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only son our Lord, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. And He is the only one who has the power to save. So that when we approach God and we pray to God the Father through Jesus the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, or when we talk about the doctrine of salvation, we say our salvation was planned by God the Father, accomplished by God the Son and applied by God the spirit. He is Jesus the son of God. But go with me to verse 15 and watch how the description continues.

He is compassionate. Let’s read verse 15 and see how a positive is put negatively. 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. He sympathizes with us (the Greek word is *sympatheo*, meaning “to suffer along with.”) It’s not just to feel sorry for but to actually *join* us in our pain.

The Bible says that He is close to the broken-hearted. It means to suffer with our weakness, ailments, depression, anxiety, lack of trust, family health, addictions and struggles. He doesn’t *shoot* His wounded; He *heals* His wounded and is patiently long-suffering. He is walking, carrying, waiting, loving, and sacrificing for you!

He is hope-giving. In every respect He has been tempted as we are yet without sin. As our substitute He didn’t just die for us, He lived for us as well. He was tempted comprehensively, empathetically and victoriously. Comprehensively means in every respect. Emphatically means He was tempted as we are. And victoriously means that He was tempted yet had no sin. He’s there when you are tempted providing strength, endurance and the ability to resist. And He’s there when you fall to the temptation, covering you with His righteousness because He is the spotless, sinless, perfect Lamb of God who takes our sin at the cross. And I’ve just scratched the surface of these two verses. By grace, God is going to strengthen you for what’s next. We need to be doctrinally strong.

We need to Be devotionally strong

Do you see the command in verse 16? “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.” Let’s take a quick and devotional look at this verse and see if we can apply it to seeking God in prayer, worship, devotions, and life. The command is to “draw near” or “to approach.” It means “to come to.” In present tense it means “with ongoing effort.” Let us draw near again and again and again. I would call this praying and worshipping. And look at the descriptions that give us some idea of how to pray.

Worship with confidence. This is the freedom to come to God with your whole heart, problems, freedom to speak and to pour out the entirety of your soul and trust that you are covered in the righteousness of Christ. To worship is to pray openly, freely, often and without worry.

Worship with joy. That means to draw near to the throne of grace. Charles Spurgeon said, “When God gives the law, He sits on the throne of legislation. When God administers the law, He sits on the throne of government. When God tries His subjects, He sits on the throne of judgment. But when His people pray and worship, He sits on a throne of grace.”

Worship with hope. That means that you received the mercy, kindness, and forgiveness, and it means not getting the punishment you deserve. Mercy is loving gentle restoration.

Worship with expectation. That is finding grace and knowing that He purchased you with the blood of Jesus. He didn't just take you out of prison but He brought you home and gave you His name. He will hear and answer and heal.

Worship with endurance. This means to find grace to help in time of need. God has brought you through many dangers, toils and snares, and He will do it again. He will help you; you are His.

By grace God will strengthen you for what's next. We need to be strong doctrinally and we need to be strong devotionally. Let's worship the Lord with The Lord's Supper.

(Pastor prays)