

February 7, 2010 by Steve Brandon



# Finding Help

## Hebrews 4:14-16

### 1. Hold Fast Our Confession (verses 14-15).

### 2. Draw Near With Confidence (verse 16).

God has made the world in such a way that we all need help. As much as you might try to be independent, you simply cannot be independent. There are far too many things in this world that you can't live on your own. Unless you are a farmer, you need others to help you raise food for you. Unless you are a tailor, you need others to help you make your clothes. Unless you are a mechanic, you will need others to help you with your car when it breaks down. When it comes to daily life, you simply can't do it all.

Now, in God's providence, there are some who can help in a major way. For instance, if you have problems with something in your house, Dirk is a good person to call. He has gifts in this area which are second to none. I have had several problems with my house, and Dirk has been by to help me.

I remember on one occasion, my water softener wasn't working, so I had taken it apart. Dirk happened to come over and I asked him to help me with it. He knew all about how a water softener works and helped me with it. On another occasion, I had some problems with my clothes dryer. Dirk happened to be over at our home and I asked him to help me with it. He knew all about how a dryer works and helped me out. On another occasion, my father and I were at the home helping dig a drainage ditch away from his home to help prevent flooding in the home. Dirk happened to show up and proceeded to help with the engineering of the entire project. In my mind, Dirk can help you with any of your household projects.

But, Dirk can't do it all. When I have a medical problem, I don't call Dirk. I call my father, who was a physician. If he doesn't know how to address my particular difficulty, then he can look it up in his Physician's Desk Reference and get back to me at an opportune time.

I remember one time when I was skateboarding with my son at a skate park. I'm not the greatest skateboarder around, that's for sure. However, I had gone up and down a few times, thinking pretty good about myself. But, that last time, I was going down a little ramp and fell down, face first. Perhaps some of you remember when this happened to me. Initially, I hit the ground so hard that I thought that I had broken my skull. But, after a bit, it wasn't my head that was hurting. Rather, it was my wrist.

And so, I called my dad on the phone. This was about 7:30 at night. He asked me to try to move my arm and my wrist in certain ways. He asked me where it hurt. I told him repeatedly of how it hurt in my wrist. Well, after a few minutes of diagnosis over the phone, he said, "Steve, I think that you broke your radial head." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You broke a bone in your elbow." I said, "But, it's my wrist that hurts." He said, "I know, but I still think that you broke your elbow." Sure enough, when I went to see him the next morning, I had indeed broken my elbow and not my wrist. But, the point is this: when I have medical issues, I call my father.

And the list could go on and on. When I have questions about financial matters, I call Phil. When I have questions about my car, I ask my mechanic neighbor. When I have questions about music, I ask my wife. When I have questions about the Bible, I turn to my books. There is no one source for answers to my questions about the matters of our physical lives. However, when it comes to spiritual matters, there is one to whom you can take all of your concerns.

It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He can help you in every situation. In this way, our faith is so simple; we merely need to look to Jesus. In this way, my role as a pastor is so simple; I merely need to point people to Jesus. This is the way that you can "find help" for all of your spiritual needs.

My message this morning is entitled, "Finding Help." You can find help in Jesus. This is the message of our text, Hebrews 4:14-16. Let's read our text before us.

#### Hebrews 4:14-16

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In verse 16, you can see where I got my title. The final purpose clause of this verse says, "so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We can find the help we need in Jesus.

In these three verses, we find two commands. These two commands will form the basis of my outline this morning. The first command comes in verse 14 and is my first point, ...

#### 1. Hold Fast Our Confession (verses 14-15).

Look again there at verse 14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

Several other times in the book of Hebrews, the writer uses this word, "**confession**." It doesn't mean, "confession" of sins, as if we have something to tell the Lord about the way that we have failed Him. That's not the point of this word. Rather, it means, "confession" in terms of "profession." It means "everything that we believe." We use this word this way today. Churches have "Confessions of faith," which outline the things that they believe. These are sometimes called "Doctrinal statements." Historically, there have been many "Confessions of faith" written. There is the Westminster Confession. There is the Helvetic Confession. There is the London Baptist Confession and many, many more. Each one of these confessions were carefully written out documents, seeking to explain carefully the truths of the Scripture.

But, what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about here goes beyond mere adherence to a doctrinal statement. Rather, he's talking about the confession of our loyalty to Jesus, and everything that's true in Him. He's talking about embracing Jesus from the heart. This confession isn't about the subtleties of the faith, like the role of women in the church and the home; like the methodology of ministry; like the activity of the Spirit in the church; like the timing of end times events.

Rather, it's like the confession of 1 Timothy 3:16, "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

The confession is all about Jesus. You can see this clearly in the ways that this word is used in the book of Hebrews. For instance, look back at Hebrews 3:1: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." We confess that Jesus is our Apostle. We confess that Jesus is our High Priest. Jesus is the One upon whom we have placed our faith. He is the one that we confess before men. He is the Apostle - that is the One who was sent from God. He is the High Priest - that is the one who brings us to God. We confess Jesus. We believe upon Him.

Again, this word, confession, is used in Hebrews 10:23: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." We confess that our hope is upon Jesus, and Him alone. We confess that our faith is upon His faithful promises. We confess Jesus. We believe upon Him. That's the sense of this word used in our text. Our "confession" is the substance of our faith, Jesus Christ. Our confession is all about Jesus, who He is and what He has done.

Notice here that we are called to "hold fast our confession." This means that we ought to embrace it and cherish it and love it. It means that we grip the realities of Jesus in such a way that we won't ever let go. By this, the writer means that we are to hold fast to everything that's true about Jesus, to everything that's true about our salvation, to everything that's true about the great realities of our faith.

Here in Hebrews, it's clear who Jesus is. The writer begins the book by describing Jesus. Jesus is the final revelation of God (Heb. 1:2). Jesus is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). Jesus is the creator of the world (Heb. 1:2). Jesus is the radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the sustainer of the universe (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is currently seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus isn't merely some obscure Jew who lived in the first century. No, He is the sovereign Lord of the universe. He is greater in majesty and power than the angels. The angels will fall before Him and worship Him (Heb. 1:6). He's better than Moses, the great leader of Israel. Moses was a servant; Jesus is the Son! As we shall see in weeks to come, He is better than Aaron or Melchizedek (chapters 5 and 7). His covenant is better than any other covenant (chapter 8). His sacrifice is better than any other sacrifice (chapters 9-10). It is fitting that the writer would identify Him here in verse 14 as "**the Son of God**."

But, not only is Jesus the glorious one, the very Son of God, He has also been sacrificed for our sins. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus "made purification of our sins." Jesus has "suffered" for us (Heb. 2:18). As Hebrews 2:14 says, "He partook of [flesh] that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." As such, he has brought us to God, becoming our mediator (Heb. 9:15). And, notice once again, in verse 14, that the writer gives us a reason for holding fast our confession. It's all based upon who Jesus is. Particularly, it's based upon the fact that Jesus is our **great high priest**. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Heb. 4:14).

In weeks to come, we will be talking much about high priests. The role of a high priest is the main topic of chapter 5. High priests are further mentioned in chapter 7. At the beginning of chapter 8, the writer says, "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1).

But, notice here in verse 14 that Jesus isn't merely called a "high priest." He is called a "great high priest." In other words, He is beyond all high priests.

In the days of the apostles, the high priest played a very important role. In all of Israel, there was only one high priest each year to come before God. He was considered to be the most holy person in the land. Once a year, he would go before the LORD, representing the people of Israel.

A modern-day equivalent might be the pope. There are many priests in the Roman Catholic Church. There are fewer bishops. There are fewer cardinals. But, there is only one pope. And the Roman Catholic Church reveres the man. He's the guy. There is nobody on earth as holy as the pope. Indeed, the Roman Catholic Church calls him the "vicar of Christ." That is, "Christ's representative upon the earth. But, Jesus, being the "great high priest" is higher than any high priest. He is higher than the pope. He makes the role of the pope seem meaningless (as indeed it is).

The loftiness of Jesus is seen right there in verse 14. His priesthood wasn't merely an earthly priesthood. Rather, it was a heavenly priesthood. Look again at verse 14, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest **who has passed through the heavens**, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

This is significant. Every other high priest merely walked through the veil of the tabernacle into the holy of holies, which was the holiest place on earth. But Jesus walked through the veil of death into heaven itself, into the heavenly tabernacle, and into the presence of God! "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb 9:24).

See, the ministry of Jesus wasn't merely an earthly ministry. It was a heavenly one! It didn't merely appease the wrath of God, it brought us to God! Oh, church family, hold fast our confession. Don't let Jesus slip through your fingers. Don't let go of Jesus. His person and His work are greater than anything else on the earth.

There is a reason why Paul would say, "May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). Because the work of Christ upon the cross is our everything. Through His suffering, Jesus brings us to God (1 Peter 3:18). Through His work on the cross, we are washed clean of all of our sins (Col. 2:13). There is nothing - there is no one - who can top Jesus. So, hold fast your confession. Now, understand that there are many things that are competing all the time to pull you away.

In the days when Hebrews was originally written, the danger of the readers is that they would return again into their Judaism, complete with its sacrifice and ceremonies, feasts and festivals. But, the argument here is that Jesus is better than anything else that you had in the old covenant. So hold fast to Him. Don't return to the former ways, which were inferior.

In our day and age, there is plenty to pull you away as well. Your own morality may pull you away. You may be carried away in how good you have become in following God. You attend church every week without fail. You read your Bible consistently. You pray. You do some good works. But, this is actually pulling you away from Jesus. It's pulling away from Him and His righteousness.

Furthermore, there is the pull of the world to look to our own strength. Humanism pervades our culture. We are so focused upon the power of man, that we can begin to think that we don't need Jesus. We have built sky-scrapers. We have sent men into space. We think that we can conquer it all. What need do we have of Jesus?

Within the church, there are influences that can pull you away. To the Corinthians, Paul said, ...

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Here was the church in Corinth, straying from their singular focus upon Christ. And other churches can do this as well. For instance, my wife and children happened to be inside another church building yesterday. They told me that upon the stage were two, giant football helmets each 6, 7, perhaps 8 feet tall. They were facing each other. One was a helmet of the New Orleans Saints. The other was a helmet of the Indianapolis Colts. In front of the helmets were some clothes racks, containing some 20-30 football jerseys from either team. In front of that, there were some tables with football paraphernalia.

Now, I don't know exactly what's taking place in church today at that location. Believing the best about them, I believe that they will be teaching some sort of spiritual analogy. But, it sure seems to me like there will be a large temptation to turn away from the sufficiency of Jesus in all things. Whatever they do, there is a high likelihood that they will pull people away from calling upon and trusting in Jesus. May that never happen at Rock Valley Bible Church.

I received an email from someone this week. It was written in reference to the new song that we sang this Sunday, "Jesus, my great High Priest." The email said this, "Steve, all I wanted to say to you is how Christ-centered that new song is! Who picked it out? I don't know how I ever found pleasure in the songs at our old church that were more of concert quality rather than humble, truth revealing quality. If it was you that picked it out, thanks!" Actually, my wife picked out the song. Thanks to her. [\[1\]](#)

But, this is all that we want. We want to be in the business of directing people to Jesus. As a pastor, I know that I can't solve your deepest problems. As a pastor, I know that I can't give you your deepest joys. As a pastor, I know that I can't overcome your sins. But, I know one who can help you in all these things. It's Jesus. And we as a church must be about directing us all to the one who can ultimately help us.

You need help? Jesus can help you. Hold fast to Him. Don't let go. We see in verse 15 one of the ways that Jesus helps us. He sympathizes with us in our weakness. Look there at verse 15, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

This verse begins with a double-negative. "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize" with us. You turn that around and you get the real sense of the verse, "We have a high priest who can sympathize" with us. Oh, do you realize how blessed we are to have such a great high priest?

Just imagine what it would be like if God didn't sympathize with our weaknesses? Just imagine what it would be like if God didn't take into account that we are but weak and frail flesh (Ps. 103:14). Just imagine what it would be like if God didn't have compassion for us like a father does for his child (Ps. 103:13). Just imagine.

Sometimes, we can be so ingrained into our Christian culture, that we forget the treasures of our faith. If we didn't have a compassionate God, life would be terrible. We would be exasperated by God, just like the child whose parents always demand perfection and won't allow for anything less (Col. 3:21). God would be provoked to anger all the time (Eph. 6:4), because we just can't satisfy Him. But, alas, that's not the

case. We have a sympathetic high priest, who will feel for us in our distress and trouble.

Church family, let it sink in. We don't have a God who is far off and away. No, we have a God who has come and dwelt among us. So, he knows first-hand our trials and hardships. But, we have more than mere sympathy. We have one who conquered! The first half of verse 15 shows how Jesus can sympathize with us. The second half of verse 15 shows that Jesus can help us (which, of course, is the theme of verse 16).

It's wonderful that these two things are together. Could you imagine if Jesus could only sympathize with us, but not help us? It would be like you having a furnace that stops working. Then, you call your friend to tell him what's going on. It doesn't help much if the friend you called looking for help merely sympathizes with you. "Oh, I'm so sorry that your furnace went out. Let me cry with you. Let me pray with you." Those things are nice and all, but what you need is someone who has fixed a furnace before. Otherwise, you are going to be cold! You need someone who has "been there, done that." You need a repair man, who can fix your furnace.

Likewise, when you are sick, a sympathizing mother helps, but it's not sufficient. "Dear child, I'm so sorry that you are sick. Here, let me sit with you in bed. I'll give you plenty of fluids and keep you company in your distress." Those things are fine and all, but what you really need is a doctor. You need someone to diagnose your problem and set you on the path to recovery with antibiotics or a cast or surgery or something. So, likewise, the first half of verse 15 without the second half would be a tragedy for us.

Let's look at the end of verse 15, "[we have a high priest who] who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." In other words, Jesus was tempted in everything, but came away victorious. He received the world's greatest trials. He was tempted by Satan, Himself at the very moment of weakness (Matt. 4). Jesus was abandoned by all of his close followers (Matt. 26:31). He was unjustly condemned to death (Matt. 27:24-26). When upon the cross, Jesus was mocked by all who saw Him (Matt. 26:59-64). "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (1 Pet. 2:23). He was abandoned by God upon the cross at the very moment when He needed Him the most (Matt. 27:46).

And yet, the wonderful thing is this: through it all, Jesus never sinned. [\[2\]](#) Therefore (and this may not be totally obvious) He is the one who is perfectly qualified to help you in the temptation because Jesus endured more temptation than you ever will.

Think about it this way. Imagine with me a man running a marathon, 26 miles, 385 yards. In the process of running, he begins to feel the fatigue that is normal for such a race. His legs ache. His knees ache. His lungs are burning. He is downright tired. His body is pleading for him to quit. In fact, the longer he runs, the louder his body screams for him to stop. But, the one who endures to the finish line, never giving in to the impulse to quit, is the one most capable to come along side another runner and help him to conquer the temptation to stop running. He can say, "Listen, I know how it feels. I know the burning in your legs and knees. I know the fatigue that you are experiencing. I know that your body wants to quit. But, keep going. I've done it. You can do it too."

So it is with sin. The longer one endures the temptation, and continues to obey God rather than the flesh, the temptation grows and grows, until it that final release. Satan departs, the mockers leave, or perhaps you die. And the one who endures until the end, without giving in has overcome the strongest of temptations.

So it is with Jesus. He endured the full weight of sin and temptation, but He never gave in. He knows how to conquer sin. He knows how to help us conquer sin as well. And thus, the conclusion is that He is able to help us in time of need. That comes in verse 16.

Verses 14 and 15 tell us to Hold Fast our Confession (verses 14-15). Verse 16 instructs us to, ...  
2. Draw Near with Confidence (verses 16).

Consider verse 16, ...

Hebrews 4:16

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The issue before the original readers of this letter was one of assurance. They had left Judaism. And now, they had come into the church, which followed Jesus, the Messiah. But, there came an influence from those outside the church. They were attempting to pull them back into Judaism. I'm sure that they heard every argument in the book.

"Moses told us to sacrifice bulls and goats for atonement. How can one sacrifice satisfy God?"

"Jesus was a good man, to be sure. But are you sure that He was the Messiah? We are still under the bondage of the Romans."

"Look at what your new belief has brought you: tribulation and persecution. Surely this isn't God's plan, is it?"

"You have forsaken the religion of your fathers. Come back to your heritage. Join us in the temple."

Surely, there was some doubt that had crept into their minds. To these things, the writer tells us to "draw near **with confidence** to the throne of grace." In other words, be sure that everything that I have told you of Jesus is true. "Jesus is better than anything that you left behind in deserting your Judaism. You don't need to go back. You can have confidence in approaching Jesus. He hears you and is ready to help you." His throne is a "**throne of grace**."

Again, this is one of those statements that we have become all too familiar with. We just assume that Jesus will receive us. We just assume that Jesus will receive us with grace. But, such was not the case with the original readers. They grew up in the day and age when it was a

terror to approach God. Sure, they had the Psalms of David and many holy men prayed directly to God. But, their culture was one of much more fear than we experience today. They knew the tragedies of approaching God wrongly. When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, "fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died" (Lev. 10:2). When the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark, the Lord struck down 50,070 men for their sins. When Uzzah touched the ark, God struck him dead (2 Sam. 6). When Isaiah came into God's presence, he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone" (Is. 6:5).

But here, the writer exhorts us to come to the "throne of grace," where such wrath is absent. The wrath is gone, not because God has changed and is a nicer God than He was before. No, the wrath is gone, because Jesus has taken it all upon Himself. Jesus took the wrath, so that we could know the grace. And since Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand, it is now a "throne of grace." And when we come to the throne, we are lavished with God's goodness toward us.

One of the most stunning verses in all of Hebrews comes in chapter 7, verse 25, where it says that Jesus "is able ... to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." In other words, Jesus is always praying for us. He is praying for us right now! It is His full-time job. After dying for our sins, He has now taken His seat at the Father's right hand and has assumed the role of pleading His blood before the Father on our behalf. And when we show up, Jesus says, to us, "Hey, I was just praying for you. I'm glad you stopped by. What do you need?"

Verse 16 puts forth two things that we ultimately need from the throne of grace. We need **mercy** and we need **grace**. And this is exactly what we receive. Mercy is God's withholding of the punishment that we rightly deserve. Grace is God's giving of the strength we so desperately need. Let me ask you, "Who needs mercy?" "Who needs grace?" We all need mercy and grace.

Do you draw near to the throne of grace with confidence? Do you draw near, knowing that Jesus Christ bids you to come to Him? Do you draw near, knowing that Jesus is awaiting your arrival? That's what these words are about. They are about praying. They are about coming to Jesus.

"Do you pray?" Is there time set aside in your day to pray? More importantly, do you live your life with an attitude of prayer? Do you live pleading, "Jesus, help me. Jesus help me. Jesus help me." I do believe that this is the most Christian way to live, constantly praying to Jesus. "Jesus, I need mercy. Jesus, I need grace." This is the spirit of Paul's command, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

Why wouldn't we live this way? Perhaps we don't come to Jesus because we aren't holding fast our confession. Perhaps we don't come to Jesus because we don't see ourselves in need. Well, I'm here to tell you this morning that you have need. You need to run to Jesus. You have need to draw near to Jesus.

O, church family, may we live each day in constant communion with God.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 7, 2010 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] For those interested, we played the song entitled, "Jesus My Great High Priest." The words are old (written by Isaac Watts), but the music is new (written by Kirk Ward). See <http://worshipinthecity.wordpress.com/songs/jesus-my-great-high-priest/> for a recording.

1. Jesus, my great High Priest offered his blood and died  
My guilty conscience seeks no sacrifice beside.  
His pow'rful blood did once atone,  
and now it pleads before the throne;  
And now it pleads before the throne.

2. To this dear Surety's hand will I commit my cause;  
He answers and fulfills his Father's broken laws.  
Behold my soul at freedom set;  
My Surety paid the dreadful debt;  
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.

*Chorus:*

Now I approach the throne, and I have confidence  
Jesus, my great High Priest offered his blood and died  
Now I approach the throne, and I have confidence  
Jesus, my great High Priest offered his blood and died  
For me.

3. My Advocate appears for my defense on high;  
The Father bows his ears and lays his thunder by.  
Not all that hell or sin can say  
Shall turn his heart, his love, away  
Shall turn his heart, his love, away.

To Chorus

4. Should all the hosts of death and pow'rs of hell unknown  
Put their most dreadful forms of rage and mischief on,  
I shall be safe, for Christ displays  
His conqu'ring pow'r and guardian grace;  
His conqu'ring pow'r and guardian grace.

To Chorus

[2] For the sake of completeness, I want to mention a technical point of interpretation. I have presented here one interpretation to Hebrews 4:15 that says that the point of verse 15 is to say that Jesus never sinned. He was "without sin." However, there is another interpretation that is possible. It says that the words, "without sin" may better be translated "apart from sin." In other words, Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, with the exception that He wasn't tempted from His own sin (which can tempt us as well). This gains strength when the same words are used in Hebrews 9:28 which speaks of the return of Christ, "without reference to sin," gives credence to this interpretation. However, I believe that such an interpretation is against the overall context of the passage, which wants to help us in our weakness. We have one who was tempted just like we are in every way and conquered the temptation victoriously!