

# Seeking Mercy and Grace

Heb 4:16b - 5:2

Nutshell: The Cross compels prayer.

I. Context: Jesus' sympathetic priesthood.

II. Text

Heb 4:16 therefore, we should keep bringing ourselves near (Προσερχώμεθα) to the Throne of Grace with complete frankness, that we may receive compassion, and may find grace, *leading to well-timed stabilization.*

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Paul wrote an inspired book to a Jewish audience; 2 Pet 3:15-16; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 3:1. Hebrews is the only possibility.

B. Outline of Hebrews

*Authority:* God has at last spoken In Son (*Ἰερωφῆτ*), ← follow this font  
His express image, 1:1-3a

*Theme:* **The SON** purified us from sin (Priest), then sat in authority (**King**), **1:3b**

I. **Supreme over** the angels, 1:4-14

Therefore hear Him, 2:1-4

II. **Supreme as** man, 2:5-9

**Psalm 8-** Since man must reign, 2:5-8a

but man failed, 2:8b, Christ became man, 2:9a

*Theme* reprise: crowned with glory and honor (**King**), **2:9b**  
to taste the death of "each one" of His own (**Priest**), **2:9c**  
to bond with them and help them, 2:10-18  
freeing them from bondage to Satan and fear, 2:14-15

Therefore, think hard on Him, 3:1 (*Ἰερωφῆτ*)

III. A **better** stewardship than Moses, 3:1-6

Therefore hear Him, unhardening our hearts,

**Ps 95-** for Moses' folk didn't enter God's rest, 3:7-19

IV. A better Rest than Joshua, 4:1-11

Therefore, fear, 4:1a, lest we also miss God's rest

**Ps 95**- David told his people not to miss that rest, 4:1b-3

The Promised Land was a type of God's 7th day rest,  
which itself was a type of Salvation, 4:4-8

Christ's Salvation has become the final *Sabbatismos*, 4:9,  
the Son resting from the work of Salvation as the  
Father had rested from the work of Creation, 4:10

We must exert ourselves to enter *that Rest*, 4:11

For the Word penetrates, exposing us before God, 4:12-13

*Theme* reprise: Having the highest high priest (Priest), the  
Son of God (King),

Let us hold to our confession of Him (*Prophet*), **4:14**

especially since He felt all our temptations +, 4:15

V. A better priesthood than Aaron, 4:14 - 10:18

VI. Exhortations based on Christ's supremacy, 10:19 - 13:21

VII. Concluding remarks, 13:22-25

**Kid-speak:** What priest was Jesus better than? Aaron.

Would Aaron be mad about that? No! Aaron wanted a priest  
like Jesus!

C. With "**Let us approach**" (Προσερχώμεθα) in 4:16 and  
10:22, this helpful outline of the book emerges

I. Christ is King based on His sacrifice, 1:3

1. King over the angels, 1:4-2:4

2. King as man, 2:5-9

a. because of his sacrifice, 2:9-18

b. which bonds Him and His sympathies to us, 2:9-18

II. Moses was only a servant in King Jesus' house, 3:1-6

1. Moses couldn't lead the people into God's Rest, 3:7-19

2. But the OC left the door open for that Rest, 4:1-8

3. Also warning any who would *not* enter, 3:7-4:8

III. Christ's sacrifice has become God's final Rest, 4:9-10

1. Which we had best take care to know and enter, 4:11

2. For God is sifting us, 4:12-13

IV. Christ as King is our High Priest, 4:14

1. Thoroughly sympathetic with us, 4:15

2. **COMPELLING US TO ACCESS GOD, 4:16**

a. Argument that Jesus *is* this High Priest, 5:1 - 10:18

b. COMPELLING US TO ACCESS GOD, 10:22

D. 4:16a

1. As we saw last time, the “complete frankness” with which we bring ourselves to God is a necessary *personal* component in coming to God
  - a. If we don’t *pray*, we’re not even ‘in the game’ yet
  - b. If we *hold back* anything in prayer, we’re not ‘completely frank’
  - c. If we don’t set aside enough *time* for prayer, brevity will = superficiality, which will necessarily fall short of ‘complete frankness’
    - i. But if you do the 5 MINUTES NO MATTER WHAT, don’t lose it!
    - ii. Just be frank about *one* thing at a time
2. As a personal component, it is really a matter of how well WE bring it. It’s on me to be frank. (Asking for God’s help, of course.)
  - a. We can know everything there is to know about the Throne of Grace, but prayerlessness is a confession **opposite** to a Throne of Grace. We *don’t* really know.
  - b. We know what we know or don’t by our behavior. Prayer (or lack of it) is the biggest teller.

**Kid-speak:** When you pray, do you tell God everything? You should. We naturally want to keep secrets from Him, but that’s like lying to God.

E. 4:16b, “that we may receive compassion”

1. So *why* should we transparently access Grace’s Throne? Answer above.
  2. This tells us that God’s mercy/compassion is not merely received once. It’s also something we’re trying *to* receive.
    - a. We are therefore speaking of His sanctifying mercy in this context, e.g., Lk 1:58;
    - b. versus His justifying mercy, e.g., Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3
    - c. God’s mercy in glorification in Jude 1:21 is ‘finished justification’, but since it is *hoped-for*, it is ‘finished sanctification’ too
- F. Clearly, 4:16b is telling us of a mercy we *won’t receive* without continually approaching God through Christ.

It is **CONDITIONAL**.

1. This might be concerning
2. But it should mainly only be motivating
  - a. Why would I expect to attain Heaven by simply *agreeing* with Christ's Priestly Monarchy? Even by simply *agreeing* that I need it? That's cheap, not deep.
  - b. What kind of need is it that won't access what it needs?
  - c. Hit pause. Follow instructions. Return when done.

**Kid-speak:** Is God's mercy for free? Yes. Jesus paid for it so God could give it to us. But how does that God give us His mercy every day? By us coming to Jesus. How do we do that? Prayer.

G. "And may find grace"

1. Some will object that grace can't be "found" by us. They think: if it's grace, it has to be effort-free.
2. But here is an effortful grace. We are looking to find grace. As we said last time about "grace" in the NT:

H. "Grace," *xaris*, 155x

1. "Grace" is based on the Gk *xairo*, to be cheerful- all of the "rejoice" verses
2. *Xaris* is translated "thanks" several times, e.g., Rom 7:25. Thanks implies a gift or favor bestowed.
  - a. Approx. 1/3, "grace" = approval; e.g., Lk 2:52
  - b. 1/3, it = God's power working in us, e.g., 1 Cor 15:10
  - c. 1/3, it = God's saving mercies through Christ. 'Unmerited favor,' e.g., Rom 4:4

I. The grace we're trying to *find* at the Throne of Grace is the power.

1. This assumes that we've already been *found by the saving mercies*
2. IF WE HAVE, the Spirit is pinching us to find the *necessarily connected power* of God's grace

J. God knows this isn't automatic

1. But you can only test your **POSSESSION** of God's saving mercies *by* your present **QUEST** for grace
2. If your quest for mercy and grace are lacking, you have every reason to be concerned. But a true child of God *will do something about it!*

K. "Unto well-timed stabilization"

1. “Well-timed” (2x) is pretty literal for this compound word
  - a. “Timely” is a good translation
  - b. Its other use is Mk 6:21, of a good date to celebrate Herod’s birthday (when everyone could be there, etc.)
2. “Stabilization” (2x) is a compound word: “run *to a* call.”
  - a. In Acts 27:17, it was something to hold the breaking ship together, probably just rope put to that use.
  - b. Its root word is in Heb 13:6: “The Lord is my buttress/support.” (No single OT quote; hence, no Hebrew word for comparison.)

**Kid-speak:** Remember the shipwreck in Acts 27? They had to hold the ship together with ropes! Prayer does the same thing for us! It holds us together.

L. What are the mercy and grace that we seek supposed to accomplish? Soul stabilization fit for that moment.

1. We call. We get the help we need right then.
  - a. This is good news, since our human condition seems to regularly bring us to a place of *coming apart*
  - b. Paul knows this. The Throne of Grace is MADE for emergencies; and life is sort of a hop-scotch through consecutive emergencies,
  - c. *especially spiritually!* When does Satan ever take a rest?
2. Along with whatever else we need, what we always need *most* is increased endurance/patience, Jms 1:3-4.
  - a. That comes with the endurance in the trial
  - b. But we are also promised inner peace in the meantime, Philip 4:6-7

M. This is what the Cross is for? To help with my piddly little problems?

1. This isn’t the first time Paul has gone here in this book
  - a. In chap 2, Paul shows Jesus (God, 1:8) as the human king who comes to His people, 2:5-9, so He could die for them, 2:9-10, so He could bond with them, 2:11-17, so He could come to help them in trials, 2:18
  - ★ b. The process isn’t complete without the daily help

**Kid-speak:** If we don’t pray, what are we saying? That Jesus really didn’t need to come and die for my sins. I don’t really

need Him.

2. But no, the Cross is not centered around my piddly problems. The Cross is centered in the Son's glory in completely redeeming enemies of God.
  - a. The goal is to recognize WHAT the cross is addressing. What is my real need?
  - b. It is spiritual, and it is constant. So that's where my prayer must focus.
3. This is what's behind the several commands to 'pray without ceasing.' It's not a drill in spiritual self-discipline. We NEED to be in Christ's presence.
  - a. And, again, the Devil is an adversary who doesn't take time off, Eph 6:11
  - b. ! If we're not aware of his ignited projectiles, Eph 6:16, it's because we've *taken ourselves out of the fight*, not because we're so powerful that he gave up!
  - c. We can take ourselves out of the fight by simply treating our *circumstances* as our main 'grid' (i.e., not be mindful of spiritual goings-on)
4. But our prayerfulness is supposed to keep rest in our possession, 4:11, not turmoil

**Kid-speak:** Is it hard to find time to pray? Yes! If you wait for a good time, you'll get to where you hardly pray at all.

**Heb 5:1** For every chief priest, being taken from *among* men, is appointed on behalf of men in *what* pertains to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; **2** being enabled to moderate his feelings towards the unknowing and those being led astray, since he is surrounded *by* infirmity as well.

- N. "Every chief priest," even Jesus
1. "Being taken from *among* men." If we simply count this as 'being human', Jesus qualifies.
    - a. But Paul is about to contrast Aaronic priests to Melchizedekian priests, in which Melchizedek's priesthood *doesn't* come from man, 7:3
    - b. His main point here is HOW Aaronic priests sympathize, contrasted with Jesus' sympathy just described, 4:15
  2. "Is appointed on behalf of men." Jesus was appointed for us.

- a. But Paul is mainly seeing Aaronic priests as men ministering to men
- b. The Melchizedekian priest, Jesus, is man PLUS God/ God's Son
- 3. "In *what* pertains *to* God." The chief priest's goal was to attend to man's relationship with God: specifically, to bridge the breach sin created between man and God
  - a. But Jesus not only stands on *man's* side in this equation, He also stands with God on *His* side
  - b. Aaron as God's representative stood in on God's *behalf* when he sacrificed. Jesus was God *present* in the sacrifice.
- O. "That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins,"
  - 1. Gifts on behalf the grateful worshiper
  - 2. Sacrifices for sins on behalf of the sinful worshipers (1 and the same worshiper)
  - 3. Gifts and sacrifices *separate* from Aaron
    - a. But the gift and sacrifice *of* Himself with Jesus
    - b. Whereby He molds *us* as purified gifts to God
- P. "Being enabled to moderate his feelings"
  - 1. Rather than being repelled by wave upon wave of sinfulness and sins presented to him. Aaron, as a man towards men, had to learn how to represent God without hating sinners.
  - 2. Jesus didn't have to "moderate" His feelings in this way, since He was not a fellow-sinner;
    - a. *YET* His sympathy is thereby purer, better, *and* permanent
    - b. That is, feeling the full force of our temptation  $\times\infty$ , He learned sympathy at the 'ground level'
    - c. His feeling towards us came from a *real knowledge* of who we are: both an outsider's view (non-sinner) and an insider's view (temptable)
  - 3. Jesus' sympathy is like the lived-out version of the 'book-learned' sympathy of Aaron

**Kid-speak:** Did Aaron the priest know how to feel sorry for sinners? Yes, because he was one! But could he also give up on them? Yes. Does Jesus feel sorry for us? Yes! But does He give up on us? No!

- Q. "Towards the unknowing and those being led astray"
  - 1. The Law/God had two offerings for sins of ignorance: the trespass and sin offerings (Lev 4-5)

2. Paul goes there to show the compassion *built into* the Levitical mentality
  3. This, again, laid alongside Jesus' utter and incomparable compassion, 4:14; 2:18. The Levites were a good *picture*, but compared with the *reality*? Jesus = compassion personified.
- R. "Since he is surrounded by infirmity as well"
1. "Infirmity" is a good English translation here: "in-" = not + "firm": "Not firm."
  2. In human weakness, Jesus was the same as the Levites. He could get sick, etc. Jesus' compassion has this sympathy.
  3. But, again, Paul is especially pointing to Aaron's innate infirmity: that it came from being a sinner
  4. If we could receive compassion *unmixed* with sin, we'd have someone who could help us. In Jesus, we have that.

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")  
 Jesus' mission is a bust without actual sympathy towards our woes. He'll uphold his part and be sympathetic.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**  
**How have I lost righteousness?**  
 Do I access the Throne of Grace?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
 I will schedule the Throne of Grace as a priority.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**  
 Lord, forgive the insult to the Cross my prayerlessness gives.

Wrap-up: God's words are automatically comforting in that they are true. I don't have to find truth first: it's here.

The stability of Truth gives us comfort in comparing what *won't* change with what *must* change (me). Truth will be there until my change is complete. In fact, it is the change agent.

But if I'm not changing, Truth simply bears witness: I'm willing to remain unchanged; Truth does not motivate me.

What level of discomfort is warranted for unchanged areas?