

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

HEBREWS 4:14-16(TNIV)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

— PART 1 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

Today we begin a new passage of Scripture to focus on for our encouragement. (ht Pastor Brandon!)

① *“we have a great high priest...Jesus...”* — the author of Hebrews told us earlier about this **very human, very-much-like-us, flesh and blood** high priest:

HEBREWS 2 (NIV)

¹⁴ Since God’s children **have flesh and blood**, he too **shared in their humanity...**

¹⁷ For this reason **he had to be made like them, fully human in every way...**

Just how human is he? He experienced **death!** That’s about as human as it gets.

And by doing so, Jesus broke Satan’s power, the very “power of death” itself — and liberated us from the fear of death!

¹⁴ so that **by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil** — ¹⁵ **and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.**

Death terrifies us humans. Oh sure, some of us mock death or put on a brave face:

*“I do not fear death.
I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born,
and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.”*

— MARK TWAIN

*“It’s not that I’m afraid to die;
I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”*

— WOODY ALLEN

*“I don’t want to achieve immortality through my works —
I want to achieve it by not dying.”*

— WOODY ALLEN

But since Jesus “tasted death for us” (HEBREWS 2:9), it no longer carries the same “**sting**” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:55) for us! He “**defanged**” death! He has **broken** the “power of death”! “Death has been **swallowed up** in victory” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:54).

② “we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God” — why is it significant that Jesus **ascended into heaven**? It means **he is now there “before the very presence of God in the true or heavenly sanctuary”!**

DONALD A. HAGNER, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Encountering Biblical Studies).

And since he’s there, he serves as our representative and advocate before God — and not just that, he is the very “Son of God”! — **and because of that, you and I are now free to “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence”!**

“The ascension of Christ was not just dramatic end to the earthly ministry of Jesus. **It was God’s visible act of vindication, exaltation and glorification. The fight is over. The victory has been won. The work is complete.**”

RAYMOND BROWN, *Hebrews* (BST)

③ “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess” —

I was pleased to meet New Testament scholar George Guthrie this summer at Regent College, and asked him to sign my copy of his commentary on Hebrews. About this passage he wrote:

“A profession of faith may be thought of as the act of standing before a congregation to indicate one’s **initial** commitment to Christ. *Perhaps the author has in mind past public commitments made by his hearers. However, to HOLD to one’s profession means TO LIVE OUT ONE’S BELIEF THROUGH A LIFESTYLE OF COMMITMENT.* One cannot say, ‘I believe it is true, but because of the circumstances my commitments lie elsewhere.’ **A Christian profession involves commitment of one’s life, not just a phrase on one’s tongue.**”

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE, *Hebrews* (NIV Application Commentary).

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Lord Jesus, Anointed King, we praise you that you ARE **our “great high priest,”** and that as this exact moment you are **in the very presence** of God! We thank you that **by your death you have liberated us from the fear of death!** We ask you today: **strengthen us to “HOLD FIRMLY TO THE FAITH WE PROFESS”!** With that relieved father in Mark’s Gospel whose spiritually-oppressed boy Jesus set free from evil, we say, **“We do have faith, but not enough. Help us have more!”** - MARK 9:24 (GNT)

Pastor Doug

P.S. We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net