

## **HEBREWS Lesson 15: “2 Keys to Believer’s Rest”, pt. 2 8.30.15**

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This last month we have been considering the “rest” of God that refers to the sanctification of our Christian lives as we grow deeper in Christ in trusting Him. This “rest” is our becoming more and more like Jesus day by day as we submit and surrender our lives to Him. This believer’s rest is exemplified by two Old Testament examples. 1. By the resting of God from His work after creation. This rest has gone on forever since. This is the “Sabbath rest” that we are challenged to enter into as believers. 2. By the entering of the children of God into the promised land of Canaan. This rest was full of battles and challenges, as is our life in Christ, but it also yielded victories of conquest. Then we learned that King David spoke of a rest beyond the rest of Canaan. (Psalm 95). And the author of Hebrews tells us in 4:8-9 that “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” speaking not of heaven, but of a rest to be “diligent to enter” in our Christian walk. (4:11)

In today’s passage we learn the second of two primary key means by which this “rest” or trust occurs. The first key is the penetrating Word of God, helping us to grow deeper in our faith and trust as we read, study and meditate upon it. This we considered two weeks ago. The second key is our free access to God’s throne of grace in prayer. This we consider today.

Our three verses of consideration today are huge in both their doctrinal implications and their practical challenge.

***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.*

### **OUR ACCESS TO GOD IN PRAYER (v. 14-16)**

The Greek Stoics had a word for how they viewed God’s relationship to mankind: “**apatheia**.” This is the word from which we derive our English word “apathy.” The stoics believed that God was powerful and good, but that He was uninterested in the daily affairs of mankind.

Then there were the Greek Epicureans whose view for God’s relation to mankind was “**intermundia**.” This word translates “between worlds” meaning that God was completely detached from mankind.

Many of our contemporaries today have this same belief of the Stoics and Epicureans. They feel that God, if there is a god, is far too lofty to involve Himself in the specifics of

mankind. After all, they argue, where is God in the senseless shootings, the Isis beheadings, the natural disasters of earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis, the sex trafficking, abortions, and pervading evil of our world?

And then there are the Jews whose primary belief regarding God is His holiness. The root meaning of “holy” is “distinct” – and so they believed and believe today that God is largely unsympathetic to mankind’s woes because of His being so different by virtue of His holiness. For the Jews, access to God is through temples, priests and sacrifices.

So, what does Christianity, and the author of Hebrews, have to say to all of this? -

## **CHRISTIANITY IS THE RELIGION OF FREE ACCESS TO GOD**

GOD IS INVOLVED – He is not apathetic or detached

GOD DOES CARE - He is sympathetic, and more, empathetic

GOD DOES HEAR – He invites our bold petitions

GOD DOES ACT – He wants to give mercy and grace to help

WHERE IS GOD? – He is in His throne room waiting for our visit

And this interaction with God in prayer is a key to our growth as Christians

## **JESUS SUPERIOR TO AARON AS PRIEST**

### **1. A Superior Title: “great” (v. 14a)**

In Jesus we have a “great” high priest – not just a high priest, such as Aaron, of which there were many through the years. This again speaks of His preeminence and deity.

### **2. A Superior Access: “through the heavens” (v. 14b)**

Aaron and other high priests after he had to access God through the veil of the temple into the Holy of Holies – and that was allowed only once a year, on the day of Atonement (called now by the Jews, Yom Kippur, their holiest day of the year, celebrated in mid-September).

But here we see that our great high priest, Jesus, passed through the heavens – the veil of death, and through the atmosphere and heavens we see, into the heaven of heavens where God Almighty dwells. The Jews saw the “first heaven” as what we see – the heavens of man. They saw the “second heaven” as the heaven of angels – between earth and God’s dwelling. And the “third heaven” was the dwelling of God. This is what the apostle Paul called “the third heaven” that God allowed him to enter in a vision (2 Corinthians 12:2).

And since Jesus has done this for us, the challenge given is that we should “hold fast our confession” for it will all be worth it!

### **3. A Superior Sympathy: empathy (v. 15)**

To be a priest, one must relate well to both the things of God and the things of man. The Hebrew author has already shown how Jesus is God Himself – Lord of all, relating

perfect to the things of God. And now he tells us that Jesus can completely sympathize with our struggles, relating to the things of man. This is because He was born here in the flesh and experienced every temptation. And we can be sure that His temptation was far greater than ours, for we are quick to fall to temptation. But He would have been tempted by the enemy to the extreme. And yet, He emerged sinless – never giving in to the intense pressure of Satan’s worst.

This is why our access to Him is all the more valuable – He truly understands and cares – that is sympathy. But more, he has experienced all that we go through and more – that is empathy.

Jesus is truly the greater, perfect priest.

#### 4. A Superior Ministry: “help in time of need” (v. 16)

Aaron, and all the other priests after him, offered forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of sacrificed animals. And one day a year – the Day of Atonement – the priest offered access to God vicariously through himself entering the Holy of Holies.

Jesus offers such a superior ministry, for as the author of Hebrews states, He offers “grace to help in time of need.”

And here we come to the second key to our believer’s “rest” – the second key to becoming more like Jesus day by day. It is our free access to God through prayer.

We are urged and challenged to **DRAW NEAR** to God. THIS IS TOTALLY FOREIGN TO ALL OTHER RELIGIONS which see God as removed and unapproachable, detached and apathetic.

And we are to come in His very throne room **WITH CONFIDENCE** (or “boldness”) – not in our own righteousness or spirituality, but because of HIS. We are not to come groveling or cowering, but with the confidence that we will be received gladly and receive the help we need.

**MERCY** is available, which is not receiving what we deserve. We deserve condemnation, guilt and punishment, but there is none of that at Jesus’ throne of mercy. And **GRACE** is available, which is receiving what we do not deserve. We receive a listening and sympathetic ear with the power and will to meet our need.

And in the process of prayer we are **CLEANSED and CONFORMED** to the will of God.

It is rightly said that “prayer changes things.” Surely, we do receive answers to prayer. But the change that comes mostly through prayer is that it changes ME. I, having been in the presence of God, am transformed more into His likeness. I find rest for my soul. I find myself wanting His will more than my own. I become a little more like Jesus. I am **SANCTIFIED** and find **REST** for my soul, for His yoke of love is easy and His burden of following after Him is light.

**Matthew 11:28-30** *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

So, what about the shooting, beheadings, natural calamities, abortions and such? Where is God?

Answer: He is on His throne, where He has been all along. He is intimately involved in the affairs of mankind and is aware of every human trauma. And He cares – deeply.

God has allowed sin to run its course on the earth, and for the present time He has allowed Satan to be the “prince of the power of the air.” Nothing escapes God’s notice and we can say confidently that God has allowed all that happens to happen for His purposes. We cannot supposed to understand, for He says:

**Isaiah 55:9** *My ways [are] higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

At this time God has not chosen to stop all calamity and tragedy. But He will, in His perfect time.

But he does offer this, in all sincerity and urgency. He asks us to:

**Hebrews 4:16** *...draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Oh, precious children of God, take Him at His word and bidding. Prayer is not only the key to heaven – it is also the key to our own spiritual rest in time of trouble. DO IT! FIND REST. FIND CLEANSING. FIND CONFORMITY to Jesus. Our daily miracle may not be waters parted or water turned to wine. But it will be our miraculous transformation into the likeness of Jesus as we spend time in His Word and in prayer, finding the mercy, grace and help we desperately need.