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Confidence in Prayer, Heb. 4:11-16

By Aaron Shamp

Introduction

- E. M. Bounds wrote, “What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men -- men of prayer.”
 - In this series we are attempting to become men and women—a church—of fearless prayer.
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One Great Concern

- This passage is written to those who want to give up.
 - There is one great concern the writer has for his audience in Hebrews.
- **Point:** We must make every effort to hold fast to our confession and persevere to the end.
 - The writer’s one overriding concern that he has for his audience is that they should persevere to the end (11).
 - It was difficult to be a Christian for these people. It’s difficult to be a Christian today. The audience felt “weak-kneed and faint-hearted.”
 - People often fear—and experience—that being a Christian is difficult, takes effort and work.
 - He encourages them to “hold fast...” (14). What’s the opposite of holding fast? Dropping it. Every Christian will be tempted at some point in life to drop the faith.
 - We need to encourage each other.

- This theme and concern of the writer goes all the way through to Hebrews 12:1.
 - “Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us...” (Heb. 12:1).
 - Compare to a runner... they don’t carry excess equipment.
- How do we run the race? Make every effort? God gives us gifts for the task.

Two Great Gifts

- Two great gifts that God gives every Christian... so that you will still be running the race.
- **Point:** First, the Word of God (12-13).
 - Consider two facts this tells us. The first one is about the Bible.
 - Is the Bible alive and active to you?
 - It only is so to Christians. That’s a fact about the Bible.
 - The fact about God is that we are all exposed before him.
 - Our sin often blinds us and deceives us. But God knows what is going on in our heart and minds.
 - God’s Word cuts into my heart and reveals me to myself.
 - God gives me his word to diagnose what is wrong within me and I can change.
 - We tend to not see this sting of conviction as a gift, but God gives it because he loves us.
- **Point:** Second, a great high priest (14-16).
 - If the exposure of our sin strips us of our confidence then these verses tell us why we ought to have confidence.
 - Our priest was pulled but didn’t fall. What does that make him?
 - Charles Spurgeon: “How this ought to draw us to the Savior, — that he was made like unto ourselves; that he knows our temptations by a practical

experience of them; and though he was without sin, yet the same sins which are put before us by Satan were also set before him.

- This does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Any-thing that is sinful hardens, and inasmuch as he was without sin, he was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear on a man”
- If you bring those two gifts together then they present us with prayer.

Three Great Applications

- First, if this is true then I cannot go without a personal relationship with Christ in prayer.
 - Do you ignore your friends? Turn up the radio when they talk?
 - If you have friends you draw near to them and speak/listen to one another.
 - This is one of the reasons you should be coming to church.
 - Don't be ashamed if you have to start again with Bible reading and prayer.
- Second, when we are away of so many evils and failures in our society—but people don't know about God's love, throne of grace, or great high priest—where do we turn for sympathy?
- Third, we must practice drawing near to the *throne of grace* with boldness to bring God our prayers.
 - Do you realize as a Christian that God will accept you?
 - You once had great joy in the knowledge that God would accept you. But now you have learned about the depth of your sinfulness and you are discouraged. You think you cannot pray and that you aren't fit to pray. These verses are written to those who don't think they are fit to pray.

Prayer Points

- Pray for those who do not believe... that they would come to know God.

- Pray that God would fill you with confidence in his throne of grace... that you will pray boldly.
- Pray for those who have left the race... that they would return home.