

Hebrews 4:14-16  
November 18, 2018 – Stewardship 3 of 3

## Confidence in Prayer

† Deserved (4:14f)

† Determined (4:16)

In the Name of Jesus, our beautiful Savior, fellow heirs of God's grace in Christ:

The disciples asked Jesus, ***“Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”*** (Luke 11:1) Coming into the presence of the just and holy God is not something to take lightly. No President or king would deserve more careful preparation. The Almighty Maker of heaven and earth can see to the depths of your soul. God can remember everything you've ever said or done, thought or felt! If a windblown leaf in the dark can startle you, what about being with God? Remember Adam and Eve trying to hide from God after they fell into sin? Remember what God did? He came looking for them, showed them their sin, but then gave the first Gospel promise to send a Savior. He kept coming through the prophets until He came down in the Person of God's own Son. This was all meant to take our fear away and give us the ultimate **Confidence in Prayer**. Look closely how this is...

† Deserved (4:14f)

***“Therefore...”*** So we ask, “What's that there for?” God's holy writer has been holding out the hope of ultimate rest from the labors of this life and best of all, rest for your soul. ***“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”*** Disobeying God is deadly. So in order to give us confidence, God must first strip away our pride: ***“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*** (Hebrews 4:11–13 NIV84) That rattles me to the core!

And that is why God established the priesthood for His people. The Israelites at Mount Sinai were terrified by the thunder and smoke when God came down on the mountain. They begged for Moses to talk with God, then come and tell them what He said. They felt they'd die if they ever saw such awesome power again. ***“Our God is a consuming fire.”*** (Hebrews 12:29) He deserves our reverence and awe.

Sadly, those priests all died and had to be replaced. Then God sent His Son Jesus to be the Great High Priest with ***“the power of an indestructible life.”*** (Hebrews 7:16) Jesus sacrificed Himself for the sins of all people and got rid of all our guilt once and for all. What a perfect Mediator. Jesus understands His heavenly Father's heart like no one else can. But since He is also true Man, Jesus understands our hearts too. Now He ***“has gone through the heavens”*** back to the right hand of God to rule all things for the good of His church. We can't always see that clearly now, so He says, ***“Let us continue to hold on to our confession.”***<sup>1</sup> That basically means to keep a power grip on agreeing with God, saying the same things as He says in His holy Word, the Bible. What God calls sin, we call sin. Even if society wants everyone to do whatever they want, ***“Everything will be uncovered”*** on Judgment Day. Those who live in rebellion against God will discover to their horror that there is no life without God – only the death place where Jesus says, ***“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** (Matthew 8:12) If hell is not real, then why did God's Son have to die to save us from it? And if God is not love, then why did He love the world enough to send His Son to be our Great High Priest? He made Himself the victim of His own sacrifice. How could He say it more clearly? He's holding your head in His hands: ***“I love you.”***

<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

Believe God. *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.”* This is something we pastors can preach because God says so, but none of us will ever fully understand. While here on earth, Jesus was subject to all the weaknesses of our human frailty. His parents, stepfather Joseph and the Virgin Mary, fled with baby Jesus to Egypt because He really was in danger. His life of poverty hurt. His suffering under the whip and crown of thorns was excruciating on the cross. Real pain, yet Jesus never sinned. *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,”* He prayed for the soldiers who crucified him. He even provided for His mother Mary and disciple John as new mother and son. Jesus dries our tears because He can relate to every heartache. He knows our anxiety because He’s “been there” like no one else. God’s Son our Savior completely deserves our **Confidence in Prayer**.

### ✠ Determined (4:16)

*“So let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* When a dear friend texts you about a party with all your “besties,” what could keep you away? This kind of closeness comes from just one Friend who cares for you when everyone else “unfriends” you. God commands us to pray, then promises to hear and help in ways we can neither ask nor imagine. You’re coming to *“the throne of grace”* where our heavenly Father smiles a warm welcome. Jesus at His right hand gives the hug you’ve always longed for. All guilt is gone. Fear has fled. Anger has vanished. Nothing is left but living hope in an eternity of wonderful surprises each one better than the last. *“Approach...with confidence”* to find true peace and lasting joy.

When you fold your hands in prayer, think of Jesus wrapping His around yours. See the nail prints? He bought our peace: *“By only one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14 EHV) That means you are already *perfect forever* in God’s sight. Believe God because God does not lie. And believe He’s not done with you yet. I find this so comforting when my sins and weaknesses seem to be getting the best of me. Our Christian life is a process. We *“are being sanctified.”* God keeps assuring in *mercy* and renewing in *grace* for us to have **Confidence in Prayer**.

God always helps at just the right time in just the right way, no matter what it takes. Years ago some rangers were walking through a burned out forest and came upon the charred remains of a bird standing rigid beside a tree. One of the rangers tapped it with his foot. The mother hen fell over and out from under her wings ran a bunch of little chicks. She had gathered them as the raging firestorm approached, covered them with her feathers and stood rock solid in death to protect them. That’s what Jesus did for you. Only He’s not dead. He is risen indeed. Jesus invites you to pray and promises to bring your prayers to God’s *“throne of grace”* for full acceptance by our Father in heaven. Can’t find the words? Groaning and sighing are enough for the Holy Spirit to translate into prayers pleasing to God.

**Confidence in Prayer** sees the needs of our neighbors, starting at home with your husband, your wife, roommates or siblings. **Confidence** powers your prayers for Christ’s church at New Life as we’re falling behind in our commitments. We really need God’s help to stand firm in these last days, to be as faithful to God as He is to us. Confident our sins are forgiven, God’s invincible power backs every prayer to come boldly, asking help for our congregation, our country, our President and Congress, Governor and Legislature, first responders, teachers and pastors. All desperately need us to stand firm in prayer.

When archaeologists discovered the city of Pompeii under the ashes of Mount Vesuvius, one individual was still standing. A soldier stood guard at his post while the city was buried and everything burned. Nothing frightened him away. This was his duty, so there he stood. And still he was standing centuries later when the ruins beneath the ash came to light. We are called to active duty as soldiers of the cross, eyes on Christ, heart in His Word, hand on the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. When earth’s little day is done and the dust settles on time, may our gracious God find us still standing in His *grace* that bought us and the *mercy* that won our hearts. God grant us **Confidence in Prayer**. Amen.