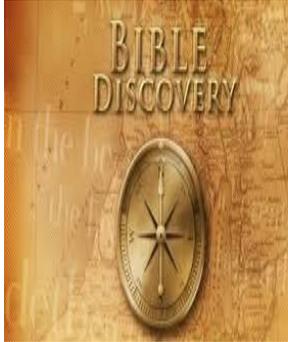


8 March 15

Hebrews 4:14-16

## *A Time of Dependence*



We begin with an invitation; an invitation to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence and boldness – to come before God seeking His way, taking Him at His word that we can be – *must be* – dependent on Him. It’s an invitation first given to the Israelites as they journeyed in the wilderness. God wanted them to focus on Him only – keeping Him at the center of their lives. In Joshua’s farewell, he instructs the people *“be very strong; be careful to obey...without turning aside to the right or to the left”* [Joshua 23:6]. This wasn’t any easier for the new nation formed of nomads as they journeyed, seeking and entering the Promised Land, than it is for you and me today. They knew the same distractions we have – pagan gods, exotic foreigners, a vast array of customs contrary to what God wants for us, pleasures meant to lure us away from the Living God, temptations to find satisfaction in our world rather than our God. The Hebrews writer reminds us,

*“Now that we know what we have — Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God — let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to Him and get what He is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.”* [Hebrews 4:14-16 The Message]

God brings the same promise – blessing us as He chose to bless the Israelites - *if* we place our trust in Him. Think of what was promised to the new nation Israel, newly formed out of a people of slaves – Deuteronomy 28 reminds us they would receive the respect of other nations, have victories, even enjoy climate changes tailored to meet their needs! Their children, crops and livestock would flourish. Joshua warned them, however, *“If you turn away from [God] and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations... they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs”* [Joshua 23:12-13].

As believers in Jesus, our world today’s teeming with temptations diluting our devotion to God, working to convince us we need not have dependence on God. Discipline in our spiritual lives is a must to help us focus on Him. Meditating on His Word, conversing with God, and worship are excellent ways to keep us from turning to the left or to the right – our daily task. Staying focused on Him means loving Him with all of our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and all our mind to ensure we’ve a right attitude of dependence on our Heavenly Father. **It’s the only way!**

Yet, just as with the Israelites of old, today we don’t depend on a Father who’s unable to meet us in our place of want, in our place of pain, in our place of suffering. Better than any headline, we’ve a great High Priest who gives us access to the Father *all* the time. If we approach God always dependent upon Him, we’ve a Saviour who has blazed the trails before us, has sat down at the right hand of the Father and is interceding on our behalf. Jesus, who

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made his journey to earth to live and die among us, has now passed through the heavens to the throne of God. To quote J.A. Medders, a young pastor from Redeemer Church in Tomball, TX - *“That’s how it is when it comes to living the Christian life. We don’t need to look for some spiritual unicorn. We just need to look at what is already there.”*

**We have God’s Gospel** – the pages of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation all show us **JESUS!** Paul says in Jesus *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* [Colossian 2:3]. J.A. Medders also writes about the condition of the church today –

**“The evangelical church is flimsy today because too many pulpits are busy scratching people’s ears rather than preaching to their hearts. But Diet Gospel is no gospel. It lacks the iron and other essential nutrients your soul needs. It’s chock-full of cotton candy that pleases the palate but destroys the soul’s digestive track. Gospel- deficient sermons and books build churches and Christians with gummy-bear spines. The gospel, on the other hand, builds courageous Christians; the book of Acts is full of them.”**

In our battle against this trend, our lesson today reminds us, *“We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to Him and get what He is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept*

**Through Christ’s great mercy you’ve been saved, you’re being sanctified and praise the Lord, you will be glorified!**

*the help.”* Ours indeed is a wilderness journey – a time of dependence on God when we need to accept His help – His mercy! Through Christ’s great mercy you’ve been saved, you’re being sanctified and praise the Lord, you will be glorified!

This is such an important part of the wilderness experience. When the people of God were in the Sinai wilderness, God gave them what they needed but only what they needed for the day. He could’ve just as easily provided all the manna and everything else the Israelites needed for their entire wanderings in the wilderness right up front – taking away their every worry. God could have led them straight into the Promised Land in a flash, without them wandering for so many years. But, God didn’t do that. God gave them only enough for the day and He allowed them to experience the wilderness as He prepared them for the Promised Land. Each new day brought them a new reminder of their utter dependence on God. Doesn’t the same apply to you and me? We too are being prepared to enter the Promised Land.

**Jesus taught us to pray...  
“Give us this day our daily Bread”**



When I think of being dependent on God, I remember Jesus taught us to pray in the example of what we call the Lord’s Prayer, *“Give us this day our daily bread”* not, give me everything I think I want for my life, right now. Jesus is teaching us that every day we turn to Him acknowledging *“Who”* the source of everything is. Jesus is telling us every day our dependence is on God! God gives us what we need in

whatever wilderness we’re experiencing. Let’s look at a few of the ways Jesus calls to mind our dependence on Him —

- **Shepherd.** Ezekiel tells us God looked upon his people and saw that their leaders had deserted them, leaving them to fall prey to all sorts of evil and so God promised He would be their leader – He would be their shepherd. Jesus referred to Himself as *the Good Shepherd*. Scripture constantly characterizes us as sheep more than any other creature. One of the reasons sheep require a keeper is they lack the instincts to defend themselves against a wolf or coyote or other predators. Sheep are completely dependent on a shepherd to protect them from the dangers around them and even from themselves. Most of us are taught dependence is bad; independence is good. We prefer not to think of ourselves as dependent on anyone—or anything, for that matter. When we find ourselves in the wilderness, however, we can't overcome our struggles with our own resources. In our wilderness experiences we need dependence—dependence on God, who is able, promising to meet our needs.
- **The Vine.** Jesus said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches"* [John 15:5]. That means not only our strength but our sustenance comes from beyond ourselves. It comes from being connected to Christ. There's a grapevine which still grows at Hampton Court Palace near London, England planted in 1768. Some of its branches are two hundred feet long, its single root at least two feet thick. Due to skillful cutting and pruning, that one vine produces more than six hundred pounds of black grapes every year. Although some of its branches exist up to two hundred feet from the main stem, they bear plenty of fruit because they're joined to the vine allowing the life of the vine to flow through them. We, like those branches, are dependent on Jesus Christ for life. We draw our life from Him.
- **High Priest.** The writer of Hebrews teaches us Jesus is our great High Priest; he instructs we've a high priest able to sympathize with our weaknesses, one who has been tested as we are, yet without sin. He then says, *"Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*. Today, Christ understands your loneliness and despair. Christ understands your wilderness. Whatever wilderness you find yourself in, Christ understands. Why? Because Jesus has been there too.

In our wilderness times, in times of our greatest need, indeed every day of our lives, we receive strength not from our own cunning and wherewithal but from beyond ourselves. It's a strength which only comes from God. Because Jesus is both interceding for us and inviting us to follow in His footsteps we've access to the Father and His amazing, unending, all-encompassing strength to carry us through. Having Jesus as our Lord, as our Saviour, as our strength and confidence, now in heaven interceding for and inviting us to follow, makes it imperative we remain true to Him.

The story's told of a boy and his father walking along a road when they came across a large stone. The boy says to his father, *"Do you think if I use all my strength, I can move this rock?"* His father answers, *"If you use all your strength, I am sure you can do it."* The boy began to push the rock. Exerting himself, he pushed and pushed. The rock doesn't move. Discouraged, he says to his father, *"You're wrong, I can't do it."* The father places his arm around the boy's shoulder saying, *"No, son, you didn't do what you suggested - you didn't use*

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*all your strength—you didn't ask me to help."* (David J. Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children About God* [New York: Henry Holt, 1993], pg. 214).

So it is, as the Hebrew's author concludes, that we should draw near to the throne of God's grace with confidence and boldness ready to ask, relying on the full measure of strength given to us – God's own strength. We'll not find rejection or mocking.

### ***We'll find only mercy and timely help!***

We habitually look for aid and comfort and compassion to a world preoccupied with their own agendas, with many people too busy to notice the distress of those suffering, lonely, or in despair, or too desensitized to care. Yet, God's Word shows us Jesus doesn't look away. He sees the inner suffering and the deepest needs of all people. He sees what no one else sees and He is there for you. The right arm of God is ours – Jesus – and because Jesus has experienced all the pain and divergent pulls of life, He's able, willing and eager to give us all the help we need at just the right time and in the right way. Jesus, God's Son, our Redeemer, our Intercessor, is full of compassion and love. Therefore, let us draw near to His throne with confidence and receive His grace.

Are you someone who is longing to be accepted? Have you considered coming to Jesus, bowing at His throne of grace with confidence and complete trust in Him? I invite you to do that right now – there's no time like the present – and take the burden you've carried and leave it with Jesus. For support and encouragement, give us a call at 519-317-8659 or send us an email to [office.mbbc@xplornet.com](mailto:office.mbbc@xplornet.com). We'd love to hear from you and pray with you.

Blessings,

*Pastor Dave*