

"Let Us Hold Fast Our Confession"

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Not sure if this is on. Oh, it is. Well, it's good to be back here. It's wonderful to be in the house of the Lord any Sunday, right?

Being with God's people, worshiping Him, singing His praise, enjoying His presence. It's a wonderful thing. It's something my heart longs for. When I became a Christian a long time ago, now 43 years ago, I remember, you know, growing up, I didn't go to church more than a few times a year.

And to be, and to tell you the truth, I used to, when I was a kid, I got in trouble kicking the seat in front of me and my mom grabbing my leg and all that stuff.

But, you know, when I became a Christian, church is so precious to me. It really is. It's wonderful being with God's people. It's so encouraging. Today, I would like for you, if you have a pew Bible, to open up to page 1836.

[1 : 14] We're going to be talking about holding fast our confession from the book of Hebrews, chapter 4, verses, well, I'll go from 12 through the end of the chapter, verse 16.

Actually, I'll even start at 11. Let me start by reading the word. Actually, let me start by praying. Lord, I just thank you for this time.

I ask God that you would help me preach your word, to proclaim your truth, to proclaim you rightly. We thank you, Lord, that you have given us your Bible so that we can know you.

We love you, Lord. And more importantly, you love us. So we look to you as the great shepherd of the flock to feed us now with heavenly manna, that we would be strengthened, that we would be encouraged, that we would be exhorted, that we would be more in love with you, Lord.

Thank you for all that you've done and all you're doing in our lives. In Christ's name, amen. All right. So, in Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 11, let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, the rest of the Lord, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience as the Israelites did.

[2 : 44] For the word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Seeing then that 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 was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

[3 : 48] Now, those are very well-known verses. Verse 12 about the word of God is very well known. The word of God is quick and powerful or alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.

We know these verses. And then also at the end, let us come boldly before the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

I'd like to go just a little before that and focus on, let us hold fast our confession in verse 14.

Let us hold fast our confession. We need to hold fast in our day and hour. We are in a serious time in America.

We don't know what the next few months is going to hold for us politically, right? We don't know who's going to be the president or what's going to happen in society. It could get dangerous.

[4 : 56] There's many warnings of power outages. Who knows with all these illegal aliens who have come into the country, what's going to happen?

You hear reports of Chinese and Iranians, all sorts of things you hear on the news, don't you? I'm not the only one that hears these things.

I know my wife does. And in these dark days in America, in our lives personally, we need to hold fast.

The Bible tells us, hold fast our confession, our confession of Jesus Christ. Now, personally, we can have physical trials that throw us for a loop.

We can have calamities like storms come through and cause great damage in our neighborhoods. We can have the death of a loved one.

[5 : 59] Or we can even be undergoing spiritual struggles. All these are trials that we need to hold fast our confession.

We need to hold it fast. What does it mean to hold fast? It means to grab it and not let it go. It means that our confession is something that is so immense, so overwhelming, more to us than the things and circumstances in our life, that we will hold on to that no matter what happens in our life, in our society, in the world around us.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, is our great confession. So in the midst of the trials and fears that can overwhelm us, we can stagger under the load that we bear.

And we wonder, we wonder personally, when the storms rise and the things happen in our lives, am I going to make it?

Do I have enough strength? Where is God in all this? Why am I going through this?

[7 : 20] Why? And these thoughts can haunt us. They can try to bring us down. Now, Satan knows exactly what you're going through as well in your life.

And Satan and his demonic hordes can put thoughts in your mind and try to steer you away from the truth of the gospel and our confession.

Now, trials can be difficult to deal with because they are, now this is interesting, trials can be difficult to deal with because they are meant to be difficult to deal with.

trials that come into our lives are meant for a purpose for, to show us our need of God.

They're not easy to deal with, are they? I don't like dealing with trials. I wish everything went smooth in life, but it doesn't. The Christian life, your life, your trusting in Christ is being molded into the image of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 35] Your life is very precious to God. And God goes out of his way. He works personally in your life.

He has a divine plan for you to be molded into the image of his dear son to bring glory to his name and for your good too so that you will know him.

We are being purged as well from our old ways, our old desires, our old mindset. And so, that takes work and it takes works of trials in our lives to bring us to a place where we rely upon God, where we cast our burden on him, where we see we don't have enough strength.

Now, the Hebrews that this was written to have undergone incredible trials. They went undergone, they were undergone for their, for their faith now.

They had undergone persecution. They had their goods confiscated. Imagine somebody coming in and taking out your TV and taking out your sofa and taking things out of your house.

[9 : 53] They had it taken because they were believers. They endured insults and were publicly ridiculed because they were Christians. You think that thing that happened over at the Olympics was bad.

Imagine if, if they brought you out into the, into a neighborhood and, and started throwing rotten fruit at you or, or started publicly ridiculing.

Look at this. Weird guy believes in Jesus of all things and people mocking you. I mean, things like that happened to these people. And you know what?

The Hebrews joyfully accepted all that. It was something that was, that was, they saw as a cross that they had to bear but they did it joyfully because they knew they were bringing glory to God in their lives.

But their biggest trial, after all that, you would think, gee, that sounds really difficult to handle. I don't even know if I can handle it. It's not my trial and so God won't, won't bring that my way but nonetheless, could I handle that?

[11 : 00] It might be difficult. What about this? What was bringing the Hebrews down was that bad teachers had come into their midst and were bringing them back to Judaism and sacrificial system.

And that's why this epistle was written to the Hebrews because they were in very much danger. They had undergone all these things and the bad teaching had infiltrated and they were in danger of going back.

And that's why this section is very interesting where it talks about the Word of God and how it searches the heart and the mind and also that it pierces to the division of soul and spirit.

And then in verse 13 he says, and there's no creature hidden from his sight but everything is naked and open before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. And then verse 14 we think these guys are getting overwhelmed but then the writer of Hebrews points them.

He takes them and he says, point, look, seeing, seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.

[12 : 25] 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 was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.

Now, three places, in three places the Hebrews are told to hold fast, hold fast. and this is talking about our confession.

Picture somebody who is in a deep pit who has thrown a rope and their only way to get out of that deep pit is to hold on to that rope.

That's the kind of grip that God wants us to hold on to our confession. If you're being lifted out of that pit rather than falling back in, you're going to just grab that thing with all your might so that you won't go back into that pit.

And they were in a pit. They were in a deep pit. They were in the pit of bad teaching that was bringing them down. Now, we need to be encouraged to hold fast when the trials come.

[13 : 41] We need to understand that that is our strength. That holding fast to Jesus Christ will get us through the trial and will help us to view the trial correctly.

Now, why is it that we often overlook these things to hold fast our confession when the trials come our way?

And I was thinking about this, and I've come up with four different reasons why. One, we can be ignorant of God's word.

We cannot know what it says concerning our trials, concerning trials that other people have gone through. And if you read the Bible, you can see how God has placed certain things in the Bible to help us and to encourage us to see God's hand move in people's lives and to warn us not to go and stray from the gospel.

So, holding fast, one of the reasons is we don't know the word of God like we should know it. And you ever hear that saying what you don't know can't hurt you?

[14 : 59] I'll tell you what you don't know in the Bible can hurt you. It can hurt you and it will hurt you. We need to know God's word. Another reason why that we overlook the encouragement to hold fast is that we can be mistaught.

There have been very damaging teachers who have hurt the body of Christ by teaching a health and wealth gospel. That once you come to Christ everything is going to be smooth.

You need to name it and claim it. Blab it and grab it. You need to have enough faith to reach out and that promise is yours. You'll have a restored life.

You'll have money in the bank. You'll have a great marriage. You won't have any trials. I once heard a preacher say if the apostle Paul had the faith we have today then he wouldn't have had to go through all the trials he went through.

Isn't that horrible? It's almost blasphemous when you think about it because God's word has Paul set up as a pinnacle as something to look at and view and marvel God's grace in the midst of trials.

[16 : 17] And so when we think that we can have more faith than somebody like him that's just wrong teaching. And it's damaging. It damages the people of God. Another reason why we don't hold fast during our trials is we can purposely harden our hearts under the weight of the trial.

That the trial becomes magnified in our lives more than God's word. And that can be very dangerous to us. And sadly the last thing I could think of was pride.

Pride can be very damaging. And the way pride comes when trials come upon us is to think, you know what? I can handle this. I can handle this weight and I can plow through it.

and without seeking God and without looking to Him for strength, we try to muscle our way through the trial and do things on our own. And that's not a good way to handle it.

You ever hear of pulling up your bootstraps and just going through it? We had a, Karen and I were at an old church and they called it solar bootstrapper.

[17:37] You know, you do it all your own. You're pulling up your bootstraps and going through it. No, that's not how we're made. We need to rely upon God. So pride is very damaging to us.

But we can see from our text that the Lord is very compassionate towards us in our trials. He sympathizes with us. He desires, His desire in the trial is to have us come to Him and that He makes the way for us to come to Him.

This is one of the many reasons He came to redeem us. He came to make us His own so that when the trial comes, He would receive glory from us as we seek Him in humility and desire to look to Him.

Now, when we think of redemption, we think of something that happened back in Jesus' day. But don't you know that Jesus knows all about us?

He knows all about our lives. We think, you know, we go through our time in life and we come to a roadblock and we think, or we do something wrong, we act sinfully, circumstances break in our life and we think, oh man, I am a mess.

[19:03] I've been there. I am a mess. I blew it. I've brought shame on Jesus Christ. You know, people have left me.

I don't have the friends that I used to. I mean, there's times in your life where you can go through hard, hard, hard circumstances and it doesn't look like there's any way out and yet God knew this. God ordains this. God knew it at the cross. He knew it when he called you. He knew it in eternity past when he chose you. He is going to receive glory from your life as you seek him.

Seeing that we have that great high priest, the Bible says, what is the great high priest or who is the great high priest?

Now, there's three offices that the Lord Jesus holds. He holds these as Old Testament prophecies talking about who he was.

[20:17] He is prophet, priest, and he's king. And, we all know what a king is. He is the king of kings and lord of lords, right?

He is the ruling, reigning, sovereign, ruler of the whole world. Every nation is subject to him. All rulers and authorities are subject to him.

Jesus said, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth, right? To Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

He is the king, king. But, the two other offices is what we're going to look at, especially the priesthood. Now, a prophet, Jesus is the prophet prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 18. He said there would become a prophet after him that would be greater than he was and the people of Israel needed to listen to him.

[21:19] And that prophet is Jesus Christ. Now, a prophet speaks, say, this would be the throne of God. A prophet speaks to the people in behalf of God.

He brings forth God's word. He brings forth the word to the people and tells them what God wants them to do. A priest turns around and he represents the people of God to God.

He brings the needs of the people to God. He brings their thoughts and concerns. That's what a priest does. He brings the sacrifice to the throne of God.

Now, the high priest in the Old Testament was a great picture of Jesus Christ. In our day, we don't appreciate it, but to Israel and to the Hebrews, it was everything.

The high priest went in once a year into the holy place, the most holy place. They passed beyond the veil of the tabernacle and they went into the very presence of God.

[22:33] Beyond the veil was the temple that was the Ark of the Covenant.

back in the early 2000s, Karen and I went down to Pennsylvania a few times for vacation. There was a place there, it was called the Mennonite Tabernacle.

What it was, it was a reenactment of the tabernacle. It was really kind of cool. They had it all set up with a stage and you walk in and there's the candles over here and the bread over here and the altar, the bronze altar and you'd walk in and there'd be the veil and you'd be able to go through and it really brought it to life.

And there was the Ark of the Covenant. And it was really a neat thing to behold. They also had a little movie afterwards and we kind of talked to the people and they made sure, you know, they would see if you're a Christian and pray with you if you weren't and stuff like that.

Well, the Day of Atonement happened one time a year and the priest would sacrifice bulls and goats and they'd go in and they'd sprinkle the Ark of the Covenant with the blood once a year to have their sins forgiven before God.

[24 : 04] Year after year they would bring the sacrifice. Now the High Priest who carried that sacrifice into the very presence of God was decked out.

He had a turban or a hat that he wore and on it was written holy to the Lord. He had two onyx stones that had the tribes of Israel engraved on his shoulders.

He had a colorful linen ephod that he wore like a coat. It was colorful. And he had over that ephod over that coat he had a breastplate and on the breastplate were twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he would go in with the tribes of Israel with all Israel behind him go into that very presence of God and sprinkle it with his blood.

Now Jesus was holy to the Lord. He didn't have to put that hat on. He was holy through and through.

[25 : 16] Jesus was robed with the robe of righteousness. The priest had on holy garments. Jesus had on the robe of righteousness the Bible says.

Jesus has gone beyond the veil of a human tabernacle. He's gone into the presence of God himself. And that's why it says seeing that we have such a great high priest who has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God let us hold fast our confession.

And as the Levite represented or as that priest that high priest represented the people of God Jesus brings our needs before the throne of almighty God for us at the right hand of God.

And that is so very important. We need to get this picture in our mind. Now Jesus is called the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now the Aaronic priest or the Levitical priest who went into the presence of God on earth there were many of them through the years.

[26 : 37] Jesus there's only one. The Levitical priesthood was temporary. Jesus has a permanent and eternal priesthood.

The Levitical priesthood had to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as the sins of the people. Jesus that pure and spotless sacrifice went into the presence of God for us without any sin.

The Levitical priesthood had to offer their sacrifices over and over and over. Jesus' sacrifices was done once sufficient for all.

Isn't that amazing? Here we are 2,000 years later still rejoicing and celebrating the redemption that is in Christ, his sacrifice and it is still as powerful today as it was in the first century.

The Levitical priesthood entered the holy places through a man-made tent and by means of the blood of bulls and goats and Jesus enters into heaven itself in the presence of God with his own blood.

[27 : 58] Jesus being our great high priest represents us to God in the most perfect, good, and holy way that you could ever imagine.

I want to bring you from this looking at that great priesthood, looking at what Christ has done, looking at his great sacrifice through the cross and resurrection and his ascension into heaven and tell you that sadly today many Christians are still getting overrun by their sins and they live weakly in Christ.

Part of it is as we were talking before the sermon with Richard, partly is because of a lack of assurance.

You know that song we just sang, Come Thou Fount of Many Blessings? That song was written by Robert Robinson.

You can see it right in the hymnal. And Robert Robinson wrote that as a young man. He was a hoodlum who came to Christ at a young age. The Lord saved him. He became a minister.

[29 : 20] He wrote that hymn in his early 20s. Well, he got caught up with bad teaching and he got caught in a bad way and he started preaching very poorly and now he's an old man.

So take him from that time when he's young and now he's up in his 70s and 80s and he's riding on a coach with a woman. And the woman's sitting next to him and she starts singing Come Thou

Fount of Many Blessings.

And she's sitting next to the guy who had written that 50, 60 years before. And he turns to her and he said, I wrote that when I was a young man.

And I must say that I have wandered. You know that verse in there, Lord, my heart is prone to wander. You know, and he said that he repented just out of that woman singing that song because of the conviction that he felt that he had wandered from God.

and sometimes we can wander in our life. And we don't want to be like that. We can lose our assurance. We can go through trials.

[30 : 42] And we can really have trouble in our life. Now I want to bring you to Luke chapter 22. Can we open in our Bibles to Luke 22?

I don't have the number in the Pew Bible. If someone could just shout that out when you get there. I'm going to show you how great the priesthood of Christ is and his intercession for the people of God.

This is powerful. This is really powerful. 1626. Thank you. So 1626 in the Pew Bible.

Luke chapter 22. This is where Peter is in verse 31. We're going to look at that. But Peter and the disciples had just celebrated the new covenant in his blood.

They were just sitting at that table, the Lord's table, and the Lord had passed around the wine and the bread, and they just finished.

[31 : 52] And Peter had been told that he was going to deny the Lord three times. And in verse 31, we get a glimpse into Jesus' powerful praying.

Listen to this. Now here they are, they're all wondering what's going to happen. Judas has left them to betray Jesus to the Pharisees and Sadducees, and Peter is sitting there.

The Lord turns to Peter, and the Lord said in verse 31, Simon, Simon, indeed, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat.

Now how would Jesus in his earthly flesh know that the devil himself had asked for Peter? How would he know?

Well, because Jesus has had two natures. He had a human nature and a divine nature. And Jesus in his divine nature was still upholding all things by the power of his glory, but also he was involved as the high priest working.

[33 : 17] Listen to this. Indeed, Satan has asked for you. Satan was going to God and saying, I want Peter. I want to bring him down.

I want to destroy him. Give him to me. Listen to verse 32. But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren. Jesus, in his infinite love, knew that Peter was going to deny Christ, knew that he was going to bring shame on the name of a disciple. And yet here Jesus in his high priestly prayers and intercession for his people says, I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

That is powerful. And when you look at your life and you see the circumstances, no matter how dark it is, remember, Jesus is interceding for you.

[34 : 25] No matter how you failed him, he has never failed you. No matter how far you've wandered, he has you right in his grip. And it's up for us to realize this and to understand the goodness of God as our great high priest, who has soared through the heavens, tells us in these verses in Hebrews.

That's why it's so important that we take these to heart, seeing that we have such 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 is unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, but was tempted in all points like we are yet without sin.

And then it says therefore, because of this, because Jesus has conquered, because Jesus lived that sinless life, because Jesus is our great high priest who is interceding for us, because Jesus' sacrifice was accepted by the Father, because of these things, therefore, let us come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in our time of need.

This should give us great encouragement, not only on a Sunday morning when everything's going smooth and we're sitting here in church, but during the week when we're not able to meet a bill, when things go wrong in our life, our car breaks down, our bodies break down, all sorts of things that happen to us.

Almighty God is interceding for us. Let me just leave you with this. John MacArthur had a professor in college that he learned under, he was taught under, and John MacArthur said, this man loved God.

[36 : 33] Well, years later, that professor had grown very old, had lost his mind from dementia and was in a nursing home, and John MacArthur went to see him, and you know, that poor man, out of his mind, what ended his final days in a state of cursing God and bringing shame and reproach on the God he taught and served and loved.

And John MacArthur had to rationalize that in his mind. What's going on? He knew that he loved God. He taught him so many deep truths, and yet here he is in his final days out of his mind. I think of that. What happens if I lose my mind from dementia or something? How am I going to make it through? Yet, that's why the high priestly work of God doesn't rely upon our physical person.

It relies upon Christ and what he has done on the cross. It relies upon what Christ has done when he presented his blood before the Father.

It relies upon Christ and his ascension and his intercession force at the right hand of the throne of God. It relies on him. And so going down to our dying days, we can rest assured that we are safe in our Savior's hands and that nothing will happen to us that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[38 : 24] Let's pray. Lord, we are grateful that we are eternally safe because of all that you have done, God, and all that you've gone through on the cross.

We thank you that our salvation does not depend upon our good works, upon what we think we need to do for you. But Lord, it depends upon what you have done for us.

Our great high priest, we thank you for your intercession. We thank you for your infinite love. We thank you for your great sacrifice. Lord, help us to live in the light of that, to trust you fully, and to walk completely holy before you.

In Christ's name, Amen. Thank you.