

Overcoming Temptation

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Hebrews 4:11-16, emphasizing the importance of diligently seeking God's rest, understanding the power of His Word, and recognizing Jesus as our sympathetic High Priest. It highlights the need to hold fast to our confession and boldly approach the throne of grace for mercy and grace in times of need. The sermon stresses the significance of actively seeking God's presence, obtaining mercy for past sins, and finding grace as God's enabling power to overcome struggles.

Scripture: Hebrews 4:11, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:6, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Exodus 33:14, James 4:8, Genesis 3:8

Topics: "Diligently Seeking God's Rest", "Jesus as Our Sympathetic High Priest"

Description

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Transcript

So Hebrews chapter 4, as we continue our study in Hebrews, we're going to deal with verses 15 and 16 this evening, but let's read from Hebrews 4, 11 through 16, so we can remember the context and remember where we're at. So Hebrews chapter 4, verse 11, let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the 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 a time of need. So he's introduced the idea of Jesus as the great high priest. He's going to, the next chapter, a lot of the next chapter is going to be devoted to the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus.

But in introducing the fact that Jesus is a high priest, he gives us two things that we need to do. The first is, we ended on this in the last session, in verse 14, the end of verse 14, let us hold fast our confession. And then the second thing in the application here in verse 16, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.

That idea of let us, you'll see that again as we go through the rest of the book of Hebrews. So he'll tell us about the Lord Jesus and then the application, let us. These are the things that we ought to do.

So in concluding about the Lord Jesus, verse 15, or about his high priestly ministry, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. The word sympathize, I guess, has different meanings to different people. To some people, it's just an empty word.

Someone loses a family member to death, and people say, well, I sympathize with you. But really, it doesn't mean anything. It's just what we say.

What Jesus is saying here, or what the writer is saying about the Lord Jesus, is more than him just saying, you know, I feel with you, or I feel for you. But he literally is in harmony with the things that we struggle with. When something is in sympathy, we use the term in other senses also, when something is in sympathy, it is completely in sync with something else.

And so, if we had two pianos, and we tuned them correctly, so they both tune to the same scale, the same key, if you hit a note on the one piano, and you look closely at the other one, you will see that the same string on the other one vibrates, or resonates, without anyone touching the other one. So, the sound from the one causes the other one to resonate, and it's a thing which is used in music to achieve many different effects. But we would say that the pianos are in sympathy with one another.

What you do on the one affects the other one. It's not just, well, you know, if the piano was human, I can hear that note. We can hear that note.

But the other piano, because it is tuned to the other piano, is able to resonate, it's able to vibrate in sympathy with the other piano. And that's the idea here, that the Lord Jesus is tuned to our frequency, if you will, so that he is able to not just try to understand, because we try, when we try to be empathetic or sympathetic with people, we try and understand their situation, but we can never fully understand it, because we're not in that situation ourselves. And even if we have been in that situation sometime in the past, we forget what it feels like to be in that situation, particularly when it's a difficult situation, when it's challenging, when it's a sickness or weakness or death or something like that, because we tend to forget.

Now, the point is that the Lord Jesus has experienced what we experience. And so he says that he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. So not only has he experienced what we experience, but because he is omniscient, because he is God and knows everything, he does not forget what that felt like.

So he can feel the stress and the pressure of temptation as though it is happening with him right now. That's something we don't have with one another, because the moment we come out of a situation, we forget what that was like, but he has not forgotten. And so he knows perfectly what we feel like in times of struggle, in times of temptation, in times of weakness, in times of sorrow.

He understands that in times of desertion, as everyone deserted. He can still remember today with absolute, a hundred percent accuracy, what it felt like when he hung on the cross and he looked for his

disciples, and they'd all run away. It's like it's happening right now.

So when we go through those situations, he's able to feel that exactly the same way as we feel that. And so when he says that we don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize, and he's obviously putting it in the negative, because the answer is that he does sympathize. He does feel with us.

He does feel exactly the way we feel. And so we do not have a high priest then, so he's suggesting then that earthly high priests are not in sympathy, or were not in the Old Testament, were not in sympathy with the people. Remember, the high priests in the Old Testament lived separate from the people.

They lived in their own towns or cities. They didn't have to work for a living. They performed their high priestly ministry, and they were not subject to the temptations and the struggles of daily living and making a living that everybody else had to deal with.

And so they were pretty unsympathetic, and it's an idea which you're going to find later on in the book of Hebrews again. But Jesus is not separate from us in that sense. Jesus has experienced exactly what we experience.

And so we who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses—our weaknesses. And that's an interesting word. It appears a number of times in the New Testament, and it covers almost all the bases.

The same word is used for sin or temptation, weakness in a particular area. Some people have a weakness for substances, or for sex, or for power, or whatever it is. So we speak about someone has a weakness for this kind of thing.

So our weaknesses could include our moral weaknesses, the things that we are open to temptation in. But it also includes physical weakness. In other words, sickness.

When we are sick, he feels that. And we say, well, when was Jesus sick? Well, remember that these things don't deal with necessarily the specifics. Jesus did not have to have cancer to understand the pain, to understand the limitation of knowing that this thing is going to get me, because he experienced that on the cross.

And I don't believe that he experienced our sicknesses. He experienced physical pain and physical weakness on the cross. He experienced what it was like to be terminal, because he would soon die on that cross.

And so he doesn't have to have had cancer, or COVID, or whatever else. But the concept of physical weakness and sickness, even to the point of death, he experienced that on the cross of Calvary. And so there is not an area in which we are weak that he has not experienced those weaknesses.

Being hungry, he's experienced that. Being emotionally weak, being emotionally vulnerable, being forsaken, being pressed to the limit, almost beyond his abilities to minister. And people just pressing in on him, pressing in on him all the time for help, and for preaching, and for healing.

He experienced the physical weakness that we experience in that way. And so there is not an area of weakness that we go through, of struggle that we go through, that he has not experienced. Let me remind you also that when it says he was in all points tempted as we are, that Jesus does not—and I know we've said this before, but I need to make this clear, because I know that there's a tendency for us to say, well,

Jesus didn't have an issue with pornography, because they didn't have pornography those days—well, as far as I know—or with drugs, because they didn't have drugs then.

He didn't have many of the temptations which we face today. And we say, well, how does he understand—how can he understand when I struggle with any of those things? And the point is not that he needed to be tempted with alcohol, and with drugs, and with sex, and with pornography, and with this and that and the other thing. Temptation is temptation.

And while the thing that we are tempted in is different for each one of us, the force of temptation is the same. The struggle with temptation is the same. And so the person who has a gambling addiction and the person who has an alcohol addiction have exactly the same issue.

It's just a different form. It's just a different thing. But the struggle is exactly the same.

There is no difference in the struggle. But remember also that he was tempted greater than we are, and because of the fact that we give in. So we never experience the full force of temptation, because we give in long before it happens.

So if you're in a gale-force wind—we don't get those really strong winds that they have in some parts of the country—but if you were in a wind that you could not stand up in—I've never seen that here in California, but I've seen it in other places—you can't stand up in it. But when the wind begins to blow and you go lie down, how do you know the strength of the wind? How do you know how powerful this wind is that you can't stand up against? But it's only when you stand up and you experience the full force of that wind that you understand the power of that wind. And so when we just give in and capitulate and lie down under temptation, give in to temptation, we never experience the full force of that temptation.

But the longer you resist the temptation, the harder it gets. The devil doesn't give up. And so he will tempt a little bit, and if we go for it, then he's happy.

But if we don't, he's going to bring more temptation, and more temptation, and more temptation. And that's what happens to Jesus. And so Jesus experienced the full force of temptation in a way that we don't really.

And we'll see this later on in the book of Hebrews, where he says, you have not yet resisted unto blood in striving against, in fighting against sin. And so there is not a temptation. In fact, this is just the reality which I believe that the Lord must reveal to us, and that is that there is no temptation that you or I deal with that Jesus did not overcome.

And remember, he did not overcome them because he was God. He overcame them because he stood against that. And I know that there is a sector of Christianity that says that he overcame it because he was God, and therefore he couldn't sin.

Well, then it makes the whole idea of a faithful high priest who can empathize or sympathize with our weaknesses, it makes a joke of that, because then how does he understand if God bailed him out every time when there was just a little bit of temptation? So he experiences the full force of the temptation, and so he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Two things about those last words, yet without sin. Obviously, first of all, we must understand that Jesus never sinned, and I think that that's one of the things that he is saying.

The idea that he was tempted does not—temptation, remember, is not sin. Temptation, when we yield to it, becomes sin. Temptation, when we entertain it, can become sin.

And so if you look upon a woman, Jesus says you've committed adultery. Now, if you take a second look, that second look is, you say, well, it's temptation. No, it's actually giving in to the sin.

And so he was without sin. So at no point did Jesus sin. At no point did Jesus die as a sinner in any way.

And there is, again, another sector of Christianity that teaches this whole idea that Jesus died a sinner. No, if he died as a sinner, then obviously his death was ineffective for us, because he would have to die for his own sin. So he did not sin.

So it deals with the perfection of the Lord Jesus. But it also is saying something to us, and that is that while he was tempted, he didn't sin. And therefore, when we are tempted, we ought not to sin.

You see, again, there's a thinking amongst Christians, and I think we all think this way to some extent. And that is that, well, you know, I was tempted, so I had to do it. You know, I really didn't have much choice.

The point that he's making here is that we do have a choice, because he was tempted, and he didn't sin. When we are tempted, we do sin. Maybe some of the time, maybe most of the time, depending on where we are in our walk with the Lord.

But the point that he is making is that Jesus didn't sin, therefore we ought not to sin when we are tempted. So temptation—to say that I was tempted, you know, the old skit of, you know, the devil made me do it. No, the devil didn't make you do anything.

The devil cannot make you do anything. Every man sins when he is drawn away by his own lusts. And so we sin because we choose to sin.

I just want to get that idea across, because I think that there's a thought in our hearts sometimes that I don't really have a choice when it comes to sin. No, I do have a choice. And when I sin, it is because I've chosen to sin.

I've chosen not to make use of the tools that God has made available for me to overcome that temptation, and there's a lot that we need to say about that which is not part of the study. How do I deal with temptation? How do I prepare myself for temptation? How do I overcome temptation? And the Scripture gives us answers for those things. The problem is that we don't make use of the answers that God gives us, and so when the temptation comes, we're ill-prepared, and we succumb.

But we must take responsibility for our own sin, to say, well, you know, it's just the way I am. No, we need to overcome that sin, and Jesus did not sin, therefore we ought not to sin. Now obviously the problem is that we do, and he gives us the answer to what happens when we do.

Let us therefore—so there's that word therefore again. So he's spoken about the fact that we have a high priest. He sympathizes with us because he sympathizes with our weaknesses.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. So I want you to see the context of this verse. It is in the context of temptation.

It's in the context of temptation. When we are tempted, what do we need to do? We need to come to the throne of grace. And that's exactly the thing that we don't do, because we don't want to face God at that time, because there's a willfulness in saying, well, I want to do what I want to do.

I want to go my way. And so we tend to steer away from the throne of grace. We tend to steer away from prayer, because we don't want to involve God in this thing.

Deep down, I really want to do this thing, and I don't want God involved in it, so I don't come to the throne of grace. No, I need to come to the throne of grace. That's where the victory is.

That's where the answer is. And so he says, let us come boldly to the throne of grace. I'm going to come back to the throne of grace, but just notice that it is not the throne of judgment.

When we are tempted, God is not our judge. When we sin, He becomes our judge, but not when we are tempted. When we are tempted, there's grace.

So let me come to Him at that time of temptation that I might be able to find that grace that I need. And so let us come boldly. Let's come with confidence.

Remember that in the Old Testament, the priests—and here's where the picture is very different, but it's a very important difference. In the Old Testament, the priest went into the presence of God, into the holiest of all. Now, there was no throne there.

There was the mercy seat, but he would go in there. He would go in once a year, but he would go in there with great fear and trepidation, because he's entering into the presence of God here on earth. But he is going in, and he is representing the people.

The people are standing outside, not even in the outer court, right outside the tabernacle. There they are. They're watching as the high priest goes in, and he's going in to represent them.

The picture changes with Jesus. He doesn't say that the Lord Jesus, while he ever lives, to intercede for us. Here he's not saying, well, Jesus is now going to the throne of grace for us.

I think in the Catholic tradition, the idea is that, let's pray to Mary that she will ask Jesus to approach the Father on our behalf. No, he says, let us come. We can come into the presence of God.

While Jesus is our representative, and while he pleads our cause, he is inviting us to personally come into his presence. So if you go back to the Old Testament picture, instead of them standing in the field out there watching the high priest go in, he's saying, no, you come in, and you come into the presence of God. And so, let us come boldly, with confidence, to the throne of grace.

Not with fear, as the Old Testament priests did, but with confidence, not with arrogance. You see, those are the two problems we have. Those are the two mistakes that we make.

Sometimes we don't come to the throne of grace because we fear God. But most of the time, when we do come, we come with attitude. Here am I, Lord, you better bless me.

No, when he says we come with boldness or with confidence, it doesn't mean with pride or with arrogance. We come humbly, and we come not on the basis of what we have done or achieved, but we come on the basis of what Jesus has done. We understand that whole concept.

And so, I come based on what Jesus has done. I come humbly, but I come with confidence, because I'm coming to not the throne of judgment, but the throne of grace. It's important to understand that, of course, God and Jesus—and I'm not going to separate them in this process—but that they ultimately will be the judge.

Even for the Christian, we'll be judged for the things that we have done, not whether we are saved or not, but for rewards. We understand that. But right now, he is not our judge.

He is our high priest, and he is inviting us into his presence. And so, we're not coming to be judged. We're coming to be helped.

And so, he's inviting us to come, and to come with confidence or with boldness. And we come for two reasons. And obviously, we've said that this is in prayer.

We come to him in prayer. The throne of grace, we don't approach it any other way but in prayer. And we do so that we may obtain mercy, number one, and find grace, number two.

Now, you should know by now that you should never read the Scripture superficially, because when we read these words, mercy and grace, we say, okay, same thing. I got it. He speaks about obtaining and finding.

Yeah, same idea. Let's move on. No, there are very real, deep truths here.

The first thing is that he says that we may obtain mercy. The idea of that word, obtain, means to get it, to receive it. It's not something I have to plead for.

It's there. You just have to get it. Now, mercy and grace are two different things.

Mercy relates to our past sins. Mercy relates to our past sins. So, when I come into the presence of God, there is mercy.

I think the hymn that we sing is a little confusing, because it says, mercy there was great, and grace was free. And I suppose there's truth in it, but again, it tends to mash these two things together. So, the mercy is free.

It's been paid for at Calvary. When I come into his presence, the first thing I need to do is I need to get mercy. I need to say, Lord, I messed up.

Lord, I've given in to temptation. Or even if we're struggling with temptation, but we failed all the time. But there's mercy, and that mercy forgives, and that mercy is there at our disposal.

We just need to grab hold of it. It's not something we need to beg for. It's not something that we have to say a million prayers for.

It's not something that we have to beat ourselves up over. It's something that Jesus has paid for, and it's available. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us.

Just like that, it's as simple as that. That mercy is available for us when we come in. The problem is that sometimes we come in, and we come with pride.

We come with arrogance, and we don't even bother to ask for mercy. And we don't get it, because we think we don't need it. I think the world is full of people who think that they don't need the Lord.

They don't need the Lord's help. And unfortunately, there are many Christians who think that, you know, I can do it my way. No, I need to get that mercy.

I need to come to him on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis, and say, Lord, I need your mercy, because I mess up so much. I've sinned so often in so many different ways. So, I need to obtain, I need to get mercy, and it's there when I come.

But now, he says, I need to find grace. I need to find grace. In what context do we use the word find when you have to look for it? Can you see that there's a difference between getting and finding? Seek, and you will find.

And so, there is a sense in which this grace needs to be found. Now, it's not because God is a stingy giver, or that God doesn't want to give us the grace. The problem is the way in which the grace comes.

The mercy, he just dispenses. So, when we ask for mercy, he gives it. There's no need for anything else.

But he doesn't just dispense grace. Now, I know you say, well, you know, why doesn't he do that? Because he makes his grace available through different means. The problem is we don't want to get it the way he gives it to us.

We just want a pull that I can swallow, and that's going to give me grace. We just need him to, you know, to put his hand on the spot. You remember the Syrian who came to the prophet, and he had leprosy.

And the prophet says to him, go and wash seven times in the river. And the man goes away, and he's very angry. What was he expecting? He thought the man of God would just come and hit the place, and that's it.

He'll fix it. Now he's got to do something. He's got to go and wash seven times.

You see, and that's the problem, is that God makes his grace available, but he says, my grace is available through different ways, different means. My grace is available in the scriptures. My grace is available through the body of Christ.

My grace is available through prayer. And so his grace is obtained, his grace is found, as I do whatever he tells me to do at that time. And as I do that, I find grace.

When we are tempted, for instance, we say, well, Lord, I need grace. I need help to deal with this temptation. And he'll tell you to do something.

And I'm not saying you're going to hear a voice from heaven, but there's this little small voice of the Spirit that says, don't watch that channel on the TV. And we say, well, you know, I want to watch the channel. But where is his grace? His grace is to steer you away from the place of temptation.

As we said before, some guys just cannot hang out with their homies. And that's God's grace when we say, brother, don't go to the convenience store where your homies are hanging out. That's God's grace.

We say, no, that's rules. I don't want these rules. No, that's God's grace.

Why? Because he's trying to spare you the temptation. He's trying to make it easy for us. And we can go on and on and on and on.

We say, well, you know, God's grace is made available through the preaching of his word. And then we don't come to church. And we say, well, you know, I don't have to.

There's nothing that says I have to be in church every meeting. But that's just where God may be dispensing his grace for you for a specific situation that you're dealing with. And then when the trouble comes, you say, well, why doesn't God help me? No, he made his grace available, but you didn't want it.

And so we can go on and on and on. We need to find that grace. We need to say, Lord, how are you going to help me? And sometimes we don't like the way that the Lord chooses to help us.

But he helps. He doesn't just dispense. You see, here's the problem.

When I read the commentaries, this is all airy-fairy stuff. This is all pie-in-the-sky stuff. Somehow God's going to give you grace.

No, how does he give you grace? He gives you grace in practical ways of helping. Remember that when Jesus was tempted—and this is the ultimate temptation that Jesus faces in the Garden of Gethsemane—he provided grace for the Lord Jesus through the disciples. But unfortunately, they failed.

And so he sends an angel. Now, we're not always going to get an angel. The angel may come in the form of another brother, may come in the form of a verse of scripture that we've memorized, or some other way.

But God doesn't take Jesus out of that temptation, as he struggles with his will versus the will of God. He leaves him in that struggle, but he helps him. And when there was no other way to help him, he sends an angel.

And the angel doesn't give him an infusion of grace, but the angel clearly reminds him, speaks to him, of the joy that is set before him. We're going to see this near the end of the book of Hebrews chapter 10. So the angel reminds him of the joy.

And folk, when we speak to one another, one of the reasons why the writer to the Hebrews later on will say, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. Why? Because God is using those times to focus our attention on the victory, on the end of the conversation, to encourage us, to give us the words that we need to be able to deal with the temptation, to deal with the struggle. So we come into his presence, and we just get mercy.

Just have to take it. But now I need to find grace. And that may be a bit of a struggle.

Remember Paul, let me see if I got the scripture, 2 Corinthians chapter 13. Three times he says, Lord, you've got to fix this problem for me. And we don't know exactly what it was, but he says it's a thorn in the flesh, a weakness, exactly what Hebrews speaks about.

He has a problem. And he says, God, take it away. And the Lord says, no, I'm not going to take it, but I'll give you grace.

And so he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. So his grace sees us through. If we go to James chapter 4 verse 6, but he gives more grace.

He gives more grace. Grace, we tend to think of that, as I said earlier, as mercy. It's not really mercy in that sense.

There's also a sense in which grace is, as the Amplified Version says, free, unmerited favor. So he gives us favor that we didn't deserve. That is true.

But there's another dimension to grace, in that grace is God's enabling. God's enabling. God enables us to deal with our struggles.

And so he gives grace. When he says to Paul, my grace is sufficient—in other words, I will enable you to deal with the thorn in the flesh. So he says, I'm not going to take it away, but I'll give you what you need to deal with it.

But as I said earlier, and I want to emphasize that, the way it comes is not always the way we want it to come, because we want instant solutions. We want to just take a pill of grace, and somehow the problem is going to just go away. No, he gives us the tools, the means, the wherewithal to deal with those issues, to deal with those struggles.

And so if we go back, then, to Hebrews chapter 4, let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now, this idea of these two different things, that I obtain mercy, I get mercy, and I find grace, is illustrated in the book of Esther. Now, if you remember that Esther is in a difficult position because her people, Israel, who are in captivity, are being threatened.

They're being threatened to be annihilated. And so she says, well, and she's made the queen, so she is the queen, but the scripture says specifically, I think in chapter 3 of Esther, that the king had made a rule that no one could come into his presence uninvited. And so if you did, you got killed.

Quite as simple as that. And I guess it's not any different today. I think if you somehow were able to get into the oval office uninvited, you would be, if not killed, you'd be in serious, serious trouble.

And so she doesn't have, while she's the queen, she doesn't have access to the king, particularly not when he's sitting on his throne in his full power and glory and authority. And so she says, but if I die, I die, because this is bigger than me. And I'm challenged to speak on the book of Esther maybe once we get through Hebrews.

But she then goes into the presence of the king, and the king's sitting on his throne, and the door is opposite. And as she comes in, the gods are there, ready to drag her out and kill her. No questions asked, that's the law.

But the king extends his scepter to her, and that is the mercy. So she receives mercy. The moment he extends his scepter, the gods fall back, and she's allowed to stand before the king.

But that is not what she had come to do. She had not come just to be in the presence of the king and to survive the process. She had come with a request regarding her people, and I'm going to cut the story short, otherwise they'll get into too many details.

So she needs the mercy to come into his presence, but she needs grace for her people. And so the king invites her in, and she's now able to come to the king and say, I need grace, and I'm really just summing

the whole thing up, and don't say I'm twisting the script, I'm just trying to cut to the chase. So she gets grace for the people, but she needed to get mercy first.

If she didn't get the mercy, she wouldn't get the grace. If the gods took her and killed her, that would have been it. And so I think that this illustrates exactly what Hebrews are saying.

We need to come into his presence. We need to get that mercy. We can't stand in his presence, even if we are saved and have unresolved issues with him, because he's then not going to hear us.

He may not take us out and kill us, but he's not going to hear us. Remember that your sins make a separation between you and your God, the prophet says. And so, as we come into his presence, we need that mercy, that we might be able to stay in his presence.

Now, having obtained mercy, what I need to do is I now need to find the grace, and I need to spend time in his presence finding that grace. Lord, I have this issue. I have this weakness.

Remember the previous verse? Weaknesses. I have this weakness. I have this propensity to sin in a particular area.

Later on, Hebrews will speak about our besetting sins, or the sins that often beset us. Lord, how do I deal with this? How do I get victory over this? And he will give us the answers. I don't believe that God enjoys to watch us struggle.

I believe he wants us to be victorious. I believe he wants us to have the answers. But the problem is that we don't wait long enough in his presence to get the answer.

In fact, if you go back to Esther, let me not get into the long story, but she doesn't come to the king and say, well, you know, Haman wants to kill our people, and so, you know, can you spare our people? No, there's a process she goes through. She says, no, will you come to dinner, and will Haman, can he come to dinner? And she's slowly but surely working the plan, and eventually comes to the place where she comes out with the situation, with a question. And so, in the same way, we don't have to work a plan with God, obviously, but we need to—can you imagine if she came in, and she blabbed it out, and she said, you know, Haman wants to kill our people, you know, can you stop the process? She wouldn't have gotten what—but she has to find the solution.

And she diligently goes through the steps in order to get to the solution. The problem is we don't want to go through the steps many times. We want the instant solution.

We want the pull that somehow—or a shot that's going to somehow just make the problem go away. But as we spend time at that throne of grace, things become clear, and we begin to understand how to deal with various issues. Sometimes that may take a few minutes.

Sometimes it may take days. Sometimes it may take weeks or months. But I need to stay in that place of prayer until I find the grace.

You see, remember Jesus said, seek and keep on seeking. Not like you send a child to go and look for something. We know how that goes.

They go in, no, it's not here. But did you look? Yeah, I looked. No, you didn't really look.

And I think that this is the idea, that we say, well, Lord, I need to find grace. Okay, well, I guess it's not here. No, I need to seek until I find.

And folks, even if it's going to take us years, there are issues in our lives that need to be dealt with. There are issues that we need victory over. And we're not going to get that victory until we get the grace.

And we're not going to get the grace until we stay in his presence and seek his face until he brings the answer, until he brings the solution. You remember there's many illustrations. The prophet Elijah, the prophet, prays for rain, and there's no rain.

The servant goes out, and he looks, the skies are clear. He prays again. And remember that the Scripture says that he's a man of like passions as we are.

Elijah was just as we are, just as human as we are. But he prayed with intensity, and he prayed seven times. And then eventually the prophet comes, the servant comes back, and he says, there's a cloud the size of a man's hand.

And so we need to persist in the presence of God until we find that grace, that grace is to be found, that grace is available. But we need to seek until we find, so that we may find grace to help in time of need. Some translations say, in the appropriate time.

You see, we all know there are times when things are easy, and there are times when things are hard. There are times when we seem to be able to rise above the temptation, and there are times when the temptation just and the weakness or whatever. And this is not just temptation.

This may be anything that gets us down, anything that prevents us from being who God wants us to be. And so there are times when things are easy, and times when things are hard. But it's in the times when things are hard, the time of need, that's when I need the grace.

The problem is that many times God's grace is preemptive. In other words, he gives his grace before the need even arises. You say, well, that's not real.

No, that's very, very real. And I know in my own experience that sometimes I get into places where we're at a time of need, a time when I really need God's help. But when I spend enough time in prayer, I realize that God had provided that need already a week, a month before the time in something I'd read in Scripture, something that I had preached, something that God said to me in some experience, but I'd forgotten it.

And so it's almost like these—I don't know modern computer games, and I think they're terrible, but in the old days we had a thing called Pac-Man. I don't know who the old guys may remember. But you needed to munch on that little energy thing.

I can't remember what it was, but you needed to munch on that thing so you had the energy to deal with the next issue. And I probably messed it all up, but that's the way I remember it. And so his grace is there.

The problem may be down the road, but if I didn't take the grace here, the answer that he gave me, when I face the problem, I don't have what I need to face, deal with the problem. And if I forget it, or if I lose it along the way, I still don't have it. And so I need to hold on to everything that he is saying to me, everything that he is teaching me.

Look, I've watched Christians struggle all my life, and as I watch Christians struggle in their lives, I see Christians go into situations, and I look back and I say, but God prepared you for this problem in a message. Maybe not even mine, but a message three weeks ago, or a month ago. There was the answer to the problem you're facing now.

But because you weren't in church at the time, or you weren't listening, or you've forgotten what God has said, you're now not equipped to deal with the problem now. Focus is real, and this is practical. And so, yes, we can get ourselves into a stew and then say, well, God, give me grace, and begin to seek that grace.

And yeah, because he's gracious, he will help us out. But many times, he has already provided the answer, but we've left it, or we've forgotten it, or we didn't even understand what he was saying to us at that time in preparing us for the challenge that we're going to face. God will never put us into a trial.

He will never put us into a situation that he has not prepared us for. It doesn't mean the problem goes away, but he prepares us. He equips us.

He gives us the tools that we need to deal with the problem. The problem is, of course, that we don't always avail ourselves of what is available, what he gives to us. And so, let us come boldly.

And of course, the invite in the book of Hebrews, seven times—we're going to see this many times yet—seven times, this idea of coming, drawing near. That word, the Greek word behind, it's translated in different ways in the book of Hebrews, but seven times that same word appears. Draw near.

Draw near. Remember Israel. In the Old Testament, God wanted to speak to them.

He wanted to reveal himself to them at Mount Sinai. Why did he want to do that? So that they would be equipped to deal with the enemies that they were going to face. But instead, what did they do? The scripture says they stand afar off.

God says, I want to show you myself. I want to show you how powerful I am, how glorious I am, so that you will be able to face the enemy. But Israel stands afar off.

It says exactly those words. They stood afar off. But it says Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

And folks, that's exactly the idea I believe that Hebrews is drawing out here, and every time he uses the same word right through the book of Hebrews. Don't stand far off. Don't be distant with God.

Draw near. And there in his presence, you're going to find what you need. You're not going to find it at a distance from him.

You're not going to find it when you hide from him. Remember Adam and Eve. You're going to find it when you come into his presence.

If Adam and Eve, and I don't know how the story would have ended, but can you imagine if Adam and Eve, instead of hiding, came out into the presence of God, and said, God, we've sinned. But instead they withdraw, and they hide, and there's no grace there. There's no mercy there.

But there is mercy in his presence. Father, we pray that you'd help us not just to understand, Lord, but to practice these things, Lord, to live them, that we might have victory in every area of our lives, that we might be like the Lord Jesus, who, though he was tempted, did not sin. Lord, and yet when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father.

When we sin, we are able to come with confidence, not because we have sinned, but because of what Jesus has done. And we are able to get that grace, that mercy that we need, that our sins might be washed away, that our failures may be dealt with, that the past may be removed. And Lord, that we may continue to walk with you, that we might be able to find that grace that we need to be the people that you want us to be.

Lord, you've not left us to our own devices. You're not expecting us to be what we cannot be. But Lord, you've made available to us everything that we need for both life and for godliness.

And so, Lord, we pray that we may be those who diligently seek your face and seek you for the answers in our lives, the answers in our temptations, the answers for our families, the answers for every area of our lives that we struggle with. Help us, Lord, to draw near to you and not be like Israel, who stood afar off and couldn't understand God. So, Lord, we pray, help us to understand, help us to live these things, help us to be victorious in every area of our lives, I pray in Jesus' name.

Go with us now, Lord, keep us and protect us and bring us together again safely on Sunday, I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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