

# Mercy & Grace in Time of Need

A story is told of two artists who were putting the finishing touches on a painting high on a scaffold in a church. The younger artist stepped back to admire the work and became enraptured with the beauty of what he and his master had created. His master saw his pleasure and realized that in the emotion of the moment the young man was continuing to step backward, inching toward the edge of the scaffold. In another moment he would plunge to his death. Fearing he would frighten his student by a warning cry, the master artist splashed paint across the painting. The young man lunged forward in shock and cried out, “What have you done? Why did you do that?”

**PRICE OF FOLLOWING JESUS.** The young painter quickly knew the reason for the disaster. But we usually do not know the reason for the difficult situations that come our way - persecution, death of a loved one, insults, hardships, marital discord, and sickness. We easily become discouraged, change our plans and our life, respond in anger, and we even wonder if God is unhappy with us. Sometimes we think we have sinned or we have made a serious mistake in some key decision. When Christians become disappointed with experiences in life, it is easy to wonder is “this Christianity thing” real? This appears to be the response of the readers of Hebrews. The readers had “paint thrown on the canvas of their life.” They were suffering for being Christians, for worshipping Jesus, and for believing in Him (Heb. 10: 32-34). They were discouraged, disillusioned, and believing they had made a mistake. Their spiritual life seemed to be wrong.

They were seriously thinking of returning to Judaism. That is the reason the book of Hebrews was written. They did not

understand the price for following Jesus was war!

**PSALM 95:7-11.** That is why the Holy Spirit used the message in Psalm 95:7-11 and explained it in the New Testament. The readers knew the passage. They knew that most of the Israelites in the wilderness did not believe God and as a result they did not enter the Promised Land. They knew that only the young ones under twenty years of age entered the land. So the Holy Spirit used that example of unbelief to warn them that they must believe in Jesus. To refuse to believe in Christ would mean living in a spiritual desert on earth and living in hell after death.



God’s warning is clear. We must believe in Jesus if we want to be right with God. We must trust Jesus alone to forgive our sins. Only He can forgive sins. This was the second warning. It was hard, pointed, forceful, and long.

**COMPASSION OVER SIN.** How would these people

respond? We have had experiences like this. Experiences where we were discouraged, confused and emotionally worn

out, only to find that someone starts telling us how to live. They start preaching the Word at us. What did the Holy Spirit do? He preached at them and now He seeks to encourage them. So He says,

Since then 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 One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (NASB) Hebrews 4:15-16

He seeks to encourage them to hold fast their claim that they are Christians. Why should they after all their struggles? The answer is that Jesus sympathizes. The Greek word for sympathizes, *sympatheo*, is found only here in Hebrews. It has the sense of “one who shares in the same experience.” He suffers with them, in their weakness, in their sin. These folks were in sin. They were not growing as Christians. They did not know God’s Word. Some were half-heartedly attending church (Heb. 10:23-26) because they were discouraged with Christianity. They were seriously considering going back to Judaism. Some of them may have already been visiting. They were in sin. They needed to know that Jesus understood them.

What a lesson for us. It is during times of struggle that we need to listen to rebuke with spiritual ears and we need to be open to encouragement. Jesus understands why we sin. He understands our struggle with sin. He does not excuse it. He understood their struggle. Why? Because He was tempted with sin, too, but He is different in that he did not give in to sin. He is sinless.

**THEREFORE.** Therefore, we should come to Jesus with confidence, since Jesus understands our struggle with sin.

... draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. (NASB) Hebrews 4:16

We are to draw near to the throne of grace. He did not say to a throne of judgment but to grace. We are to draw near and not be distant - afraid. We are to draw near with confidence. The Greek word for confidence is *parresia*. It means “to be open, to be candid, or to speak boldly.” In our struggle with sin, in our weakness and discouragement, we are encouraged to boldly draw near and ask for help so that we can find help in time of need.



**TIME OF NEED.** What kind of help is He talking about? We must be careful now, for the words “help in time of need” are only two Greek words *eukairos* and *boetheia*. Each one occurs only two times in the New Testament.

The only other time *eukairos* occurs is in Mark 6:21.

And a strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; (NASB) Mark 6:21

The passage is talking about Herod’s birthday plans. Lords, military commanders and the leading men of Galilee had been invited. The day had come. It was a strategic day. That is the meaning of *eukairos*. It is talking about a strategic time, the right time, the favorable time and not just any time. *eukairos* is the desired time.

The Greek word, *boetheia*, means “helps.” It also occurs in Acts 27:17,

*And after they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship . . . (NASB)*

The passage is talking about a ship that was caught in a violent wind, called Euraquilo (v. 14). The ship had been maneuvered into a harbor and hoisted up. The sailors wanted to protect the boat from breaking up in the storm. So they used “cables” or *boetheia* to secure the ship.

**CONCLUSION.** What does this mean? The answer is that

Jesus gives us mercy and grace at the strategic time to help us through our storm - not when we want the help, but when it is the right time. He does not promise to take you out of the storm but to fasten supporting cables around you to help you through the storms of life. Jesus supports us at the strategic time in our struggle against sin, discouragement and trials if we come boldly to Him.

When you are discouraged with your Christian life or with problems in the church, do not leave. If you are struggling with sin, do not exit the back door but go to Jesus, boldly, and ask Him to help you through your storm at the strategic time.