

# Finding Help In Time of Need

Psychologist James Dobson has stated that on one occasion he was in Southern California. During his visit he saw a sign outside a convent. The sign read, “Absolutely no trespassing! Violators will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.” As he was looking at the sign, he noticed down in the corner a signature that said, “The Sisters of Mercy.” I thought that was really sad. The sign did not leave the impression that these ladies were actually very merciful. I was left with the feeling these Sisters of Mercy needed to have some mercy. Unfortunately, I suspect they did not mean to leave that impression.

The letter to the Hebrews is written to people who were struggling in their relationship with God. They had suffered a lot, and were looking for some mercy. In Hebrews 10:32 we are told what had happened to them.

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle

through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Hebrews 10:32-34 (NASB)

greatly. They had been made a public spectacle. That means they had been publicly embarrassed. They had gone through great emotional anguish and had their property seized. They had visited those in prison and lost property. These folks had suffered much, including suffering persecution. The bottom line is they were disillusioned. You might ask, “Well, how do you know that they were disillusioned?” Look at what the Holy Spirit says in verse 35.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. Hebrews 10:35 (NASB)

This is the same theme that we have been seeing since the early chapters of the book of Hebrews. These folks had been through trial and tribulation, one problem after another.

They were at a point in their life where they were thinking about leaving Jesus.

They were struggling; they were losing their confidence in Jesus. They were think-

ing about going back to Judaism. That is where they were. This reminded me of some years ago when I was speaking at a church in southern Arizona. The pastor had suddenly left the church. It was a very traumatic situation. One of the ladies asked the question, “Isn’t there something more to the Christian life than this?” She was hurt and disillusioned. She was really struggling. I can imagine that some of



these people to whom the book of Hebrews was written were asking almost the same question, "Isn't there something more to the Christian life than this?" They were struggling. They were thinking about going back to Judaism. The truth is some of these people were like the soils in the parable of the sower of the seed.

**PARABLE OF THE FOUR SOILS.** In Matthew 13, the four soils represent four responses people have to the gospel. Here is Matthew 13:18:

[Hear then the parable of the sower. Matthew 13:18 \(NASB\)](#)

Jesus is speaking,

[When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. Matthew 13:19 \(NASB\)](#)

*The First Soil.* The first soil is beside a road. God is the Sower of the seed and the seed is the Word of God. We are told that the evil one snatches away the Word of God so that this type of soil or person does not hear it. Now that can happen in many different ways. There are many people who have not heard about Jesus Christ. Some have heard the words but they really did not understand. They heard, but they didn't hear. Maybe they read some words, but they did not understand the words. They just did not understand. Thus the first soil is soil that is beside the road. It represents people who, although they may have heard the gospel, they did not understand. In some cases they just did not hear at all.

*The Second Soil.* Verses 20 and 21 is about rocky soil.

[The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. Matthew 13:20-21 \(NASB\)](#)

Now we are told the seed or the Word of God is sown, and

notice what it says in verse 20, "This man hears the word and immediately receives it with joy." Now what does joy imply? It means that this person responds positively. He or she hears the Word of God, understands something, and responds with excitement. Yet, their joy did not last.

Now I want you to think about a plant that starts to grow. It germinates and sends out a root, but the root does not go down into the soil very far, so it dies. The root had a brief start. Even though the seed started growing and it looked like it was going to grow into a plant, even though it appeared that something significant was going to happen, it dies. It just dies! In verse 21 we are told the seed never become a plant because it died. He or she sprouted for a while, but the root was only temporary.

Why was it temporary? We are told that affliction or persecution arose and, therefore, it died. Immediately he or she falls away, withers and ceases to be. This is a picture of a person who looks like a Christian, may act like a Christian, we may think he or she is a Christian, but they are not really a Christian. They hear the word of God. They may even be involved in the Church. They may be thrilled about what they are hearing, but they are only temporary. Trials and difficulties occur in their life and they disappear.

The letter of Hebrews was written to a lot of people who were just like this soil. Maybe they had been persecuted, or had experienced suffering; maybe they struggled in their relationship with God, and they decided to leave the Christian faith. They were never real Christians, just temporary.

*The Third Soil.* The third soil is described in verse 22.

[And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Matthew 13:22 \(NASB\)](#)

This soil is thorny soil. The seed lands on it. It hears the word or understands it to some degree, but the worries of the world and the comforts of this life cause it to become unfruitful. This person can be in the church. They look real. They may even think they are Christians, but they worry and struggle because they want a life of comfort. Somewhere

along the way they stop attending church, singing in the choir, attending a Bible study, and reading the Bible. The message of this verse is that they were never real.

*The Fourth Soil.* Verse 23 is the last soil, the fourth soil, and this is the good soil. Just the name “good soil” reveals what kind of soil this is. This soil is the person who has a right relationship with Jesus Christ. The verse says,

**And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word . . . Matthew 13:23a (NASB)**

Now read what it says.

...  
and understands it.  
Matthew 13:23b (NASB)

This is the only soil that is described as understanding the Word of God. He or she hears

the Word of God, really hears it, reads the printed word and understands it. He or she bears fruit: maybe hundred-fold, sixty-fold, or thirty-fold. This is the person who is a true Christian. He or she produces fruit—maybe a little bit, or a lot. But it does not really matter how much. They are producing something. This person is the real Christian.

Now, the message of the parable is that true Christians continue in the faith and their conduct proves it. True Christians hear the word, understand the word, produce fruit and never leave Christ. They do not wither away and the troubles, luxuries and comforts of life do not become

more important than God. Trials may come, but a Christian continues. The desire for comfort and pleasure may exist, but they hold on. They remain Christians!

**HEBREWS WRITTEN TO VARIOUS SOILS.** The book of Hebrews is written to folks who have gone through persecution. Some of them have been in prison and suffered difficult times. We could say that the book of Hebrews was and is written to various "soils." The book of Hebrews contains a series of warnings because the author did not know what kind of soil he was writing to—the Holy Spirit did—but the author did not.

Before we go further into our study we will quickly review the last two warning sections in the book of Hebrews. The first warning started in Hebrews 2:1,

**For this reason we**

**must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. Hebrews 2:1 (NASB)**

The message of the first warning was very clear. It warned the readers to listen closely, to pay closer attention to what they had heard, so that they would not drift away. It is amazing what happens when we experience the struggles or difficulties of life.

Events have occurred in my life as I grow older in the Lord. I have discovered that increasingly I turn to the Lord in confidence that He will take me through my trials. But



I can also remember that early in my life when trials would come, my first reaction was to blame God. My first reaction was to wonder about God. Did He really care about me? Well, these folks were more than just wondering if God was caring about them, they were thinking about leaving God. That was their problem. Notice Hebrews 3:6. Here we are told,

*... but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. Hebrews 3:6 (NASB)*

Notice that believers hold on. That was the same message we saw in Hebrews 2:1 and Hebrews 3:14. Hebrews 3:14 says,

*For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end . . . Hebrews 3:14 (NASB)*

The point is that at some point you believed in Jesus Christ. At some point you said that you were a Christian. He says, "Hang on!" Hang on to the belief you professed to have at the beginning. If you hang on until the end, it will prove you are a partaker of Christ. You are a true partaker of Christ, and you are not just associating with Christ. These folks needed these warnings and maybe some of us do too. Maybe you need the warnings as well. Are you struggling in your relationship with God due to trials or because life is not quite the way you think it ought to be? If so, there is cause for concern that maybe you really do not belong to Jesus.

Last time we saw in Hebrews 4:11 a call to faith. In this passage it is a figurative statement to rest. To stop working to go to heaven.

*Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:11 (NASB)*

We saw at the end of Hebrews 3:19 that the Israelites did not enter into rest because of unbelief.

*So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:19 (NASB)*

Chapter 3 was about unbelief. Chapter 4 was about unbelief; and when we came to Hebrews 4:11, there is a call to believe. In verses 12 and 13 we are reminded that God knows our heart. You may claim that you believe in Jesus. You may want others to think that you are a Christian; but if you are not really a Christian, you are only kidding yourself. God sees your heart. God knows who you are and what you really are like. God can see into your heart and He knows whether or not you are believing in Him and trusting Him for the forgiveness of your sins. That is the message of these warning sections. That is the primary message of Hebrews. It is a call to the four soils to believe in Christ. Hebrews is written to four soils or to the four heart conditions of people, some of whom are struggling in their relationship with God. The second and third soils are truly in danger.

**JESUS IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.** Our study begins in Hebrews 4:14. I would like to read the verse as we get started. So verse 14:

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. Hebrews 4:14 (NASB)*

This is a very interesting verse because it tells us three important things about Jesus. We are given one new piece of information, and then we are given two pieces of information that we already know. The new information is given to us at the very beginning of the verse. It says,

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest....*

We have already been told in Hebrews 2:17 that Jesus is a merciful and a faithful high priest. He is merciful because He clothed Himself in human flesh. He lived among us. He saw us, associated with us and understood our human frailty. Now He understands exactly what we are like. Therefore, Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest. In Hebrews chapters 2 and 3, He is the high priest of our con-



fession. That is what we would want a high priest to be. We would want a high priest of our faith. Who would, if you are a Christian, go to someone who is a high priest of another faith? You would not do that. Jesus is the high priest of *our* confession. Jesus is the high priest of what we believe or of our faith.

In Hebrews chapter 4:14 we are told that Jesus is our great high priest. He is not just a high priest. He is the great high priest. There is no high priest greater! It is interesting that this phrase “great high priest” shows up only one time in the New Testament. It is here in this verse. This is the first and only time we are told that Jesus is our great high priest. This is the crowning moment in the book of Hebrews!

The second thing that we are told about Jesus is that He has passed through the heavens. Paul talked about having gone to the third heaven. The Jews considered our atmosphere to be the first heaven. The next heaven is what we refer to as outer space, and then the third heaven is what we call Heaven. And so we are told that Jesus passed through the heavens. It is a reminder that after Jesus died and rose from the grave, He ascended back to heaven. It is a reminder of where He is. It is a reminder of what He did. Now He is seated in Heaven.

I was thinking about this. Some of us might think of power. That is the first thought that went through my mind. Power! He is in a place of power. He is in a place of authority. Then I thought, “Wait a minute, it is a place of holiness. That is really what Heaven is all about. Heaven is a place of holiness. That is where God is!” If there is one major distinction between God and man, it is that we are sinners and He is holy. Verse 14 tells us that Jesus went up to Heaven, a place of holiness.

**JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.** Next we are told, “And He is the Son of God.” We have already seen in our studies that the expression Son of God means very simply this: God. He is God. It does not get any simpler than that. It means He is God. We saw that in John 10. There we were told that Son of God means God. In John 10:33, 36-39 we are told that the Jews wanted to stone Him for blasphemy because He said that He was the Son of God. Son of God simply means God. So verse 14 reminds us of three important things about Jesus.

Christ is our God. He ascended, that is, He returned back to Heaven, a place of holiness. And the third important truth is that Christ is our great high priest.

**THEREFORE, HOLD ON.** So we should not be surprised that at the very end of this verse we are told,

*Therefore, let us hold fast our confession.*

Why should we hang on to our faith in Christ? There is every reason to hang on! There is nothing here in this life that is as important as Christ. If it is a choice between this life and Jesus, it should be Jesus. Why? Because He is our God. He is in a place of holiness and He is our great high priest. Now the truth is that true Christians will continue in the faith. Those who are not true Christians will not continue. Eventually they will stray from the faith. Somebody might say, “Well, I believe in God. I prayed the Sinner’s prayer. I believe I am Christian. I believe I am going to heaven someday.”

Do not forget that the apostle Paul gives us a warning in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. Paul tells us that it is possible to have vain faith. This means that there are two types of faith. First, there is true faith and, second, there is vain faith. There is a faith that is real and there is faith that is not real. It was obvious in Jesus’ parable of the four soils, that there are two types of soils that did not have true faith. Those represented by two types of soil thought they were! They thought they were Christians. They thought they were okay. They professed to believe at some point, but then they drifted away.

Do you know what this statement “let us hold fast our confession” means? This describes salvation from the human viewpoint. We hold on, but it is really God who is holding on to us. We hold on and God holds on. That is the message of John 6:44. There Jesus said that whoever the Father gives Him, He will not lose any of them. He will raise them up on the last day. Because God hangs on, we hang on.

**JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH US.** Now verse 15.

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses . . . Hebrews 4:15a (NASB)*

That is really great. We do not have a high priest who cannot

sympathize with our weaknesses. The Greek word that is translated as sympathize has the idea of understanding; has the idea that somebody understands our inner struggles and emotional hurts. He understands our sense of loneliness or discouragement. Consequently, Jesus sympathizes with us. I think we have all been discouraged at some point, maybe lonely, or we feel like we are all by ourselves. Notice that after the verses says that Jesus sympathizes with us, we are told why.

*... but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15b (NASB)*

Why does Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses? It is because we have One who has been tempted in all things just as we have been, but He never sinned. Now you might ask, “In what ways was He tempted?”

1 John 2:16 describes sin in general terms. Sin includes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. If you compared 1 John 2:16 to Matthew 4:1-11 where Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, you will discover that Jesus was tested in all three areas. In Matthew 4:1-11 we are told that Satan came to Christ and tested him. The word for “tempted” here in Hebrews 4:15 is a Greek word that is better translated as “tested.” Christ was tested and Satan’s goal was to cause Him to sin. We must remember that even though we might be tested or tempted to sin, the temptation itself is not a sin. Giving in to the temptation is the sin.

When He was in the wilderness He was tested in all three major areas. Guess what they were: lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. For example, remember the first test Jesus experienced was a challenge to turn stones into bread so that He could eat because He was famished. He had not eaten for forty days. That was an appeal to the lust of the flesh.

How about the second test, where Satan showed Him the kingdoms of the world and Jesus was encouraged to bow down? If Christ would bow down, the liar and deceiver Satan said that Jesus would be given all the kingdoms of the world. That was an appeal to the lust of the eyes.

The third area was the pride of life. When Satan said, “If you are the Son of God,” he appealed to Jesus’ potential pride. Satan was not sure how the God-man would respond, so he tried. But Jesus responded with scripture. Every time Jesus responded with scripture. Every time Jesus thwarted Satan’s test with scripture. Jesus was tempted or tested in every way.

I don’t know if you’ve ever been tempted with something, and you struggled and struggled and eventually gave in. Did that ever happen to any of you? How about a candy dish. Maybe some chocolate at Thanksgiving or Christmas? The candy is there in a dish, and you walk by and say, “I know I should not eat that, but . . .” You look at it and think, “But...” You look at your waistline, but you reach and eat it anyway. That was a test and you failed the test. I am not sure it was sin, unless you should not have eaten it from a health viewpoint. But that was a test, and you struggled with that.

How about pigging out on pizza? Now that test falls into the area of gluttony and that would be a sin. A large pizza arrives, and other people are eating it. You are grabbing slices as fast as you can because you want the last piece. You want to eat as much as you can. That is sin.

How about a sexual habit or perhaps you are struggling with anger. Maybe you are having a conflict with somebody. You know you should not blow up at them. You know you should not let all the words out, but you do it anyway! You just gave in. You struggled briefly—you sinned. But He never gave in. Jesus never, ever gave in. Therefore, He can really understand our struggles. He can really understand what we are going through.

**LET US DRAW NEAR TO THE THRONE.** Now verse 16,

*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace . . . Hebrews 4:16a (NASB)*

Do you know why we can draw close with confidence to the throne of grace? It is because He understands us. He understands you and He understands me. We can draw close with confidence, with boldness, because He sympathizes with us. He understands exactly what we are like. I like the phrase “the throne of grace.” It is not the throne of judgement. It

is the throne of grace. I could not help but think it is the throne of holiness. It is the throne of grace, the throne of judgement and the throne of holiness.

**DRAW NEAR TO RECEIVE MERCY AND GRACE.** Then we are told why we should draw near to God's throne in prayer.

... so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16b (NASB)

The last part of verse 6 explains why we should draw near with confidence to the throne of grace. The reason is so that we can receive mercy and we can find grace. You may ask, "What

does mercy mean? Does mercy mean love?" No, it does not. Mercy is simply compassion for someone who cannot help themselves. Jesus showed mercy

again, and again, and again, during His earthly ministry. He healed many individuals. He showed mercy to those who could not help themselves. Jesus showed mercy to us who are sinners because we could not help ourselves in our sinful state. When He died on a cross, He showed us mercy. Because He died on the cross we have the opportunity by faith in Jesus Christ to become a Christian.

Sometimes when I am going through a trial, through a difficult situation, I feel that need for help. Have you ever been there? You feel like crying out for help. So you pray asking God for help because you know that the only person who can help you is God, and you can't help yourself. That is the idea of mercy.

So we may receive mercy and find grace ...

Grace means unmerited favor because of what Jesus has done. So these are great encouragements! Now notice why and when we receive the mercy and grace,

... to help in time of need.

**MERCY AND GRACE HELPS US.** These two words, "help" and "time" are very important. I want to talk about each of these words in order to unlock what this verse is describing. The word for "help" in the Greek has the idea of an object that provides help. It has the idea of "to supply what is needed." It is actually a nautical term, or a naval term, and it



is used only two times in the New Testament. It is used one time right here, and the other time is in Acts 27:17. In Acts 27:17 it is translated as

ropes that went under a boat to hold the boat together as it went through a storm. The passage tells us that Paul was on the boat along with 266 other people. The boat was going through a storm, and the sailors were afraid that the boat was going to break up. Therefore they put ropes around the boat to hold it together, to help it go through the storm without breaking up. The word for "help" can also mean ropes.

Therefore, what we are to understand in this verse is that the help is like placing ropes around us to help us go through the storm—not to necessarily take us out of the storm. All too often when we are in a difficult situation, as these Hebrews were, we just want out. We just want to be rescued. We just want God to reach down from heaven and take us out of the boat. But God says, "No, I am going to leave you

in the boat. I am going to put ropes around the boat so you can go through the storm." You say, "Why wouldn't God just rescue me out of my trouble?" Because God uses trials in our life to grow us spiritually, to make us into people that He wants us to be, to make us more like Christ.

If He just takes us out of the storm, He blunts our spiritual growth. He might give us a little storm that, with time, becomes a gale. In some cases the storm becomes a hurricane, and there is only one place to turn. The only place to go is to Jesus because He wants us to look to Him. All too often we seek help from people and not from Him.

**MERCY AND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED.** Now notice the next words "in time." The Greek word for "time" can be found in Mark 6:21. The occasion being described is a birthday party for Herod. He has invited the lords, military commanders and leading men of Galilee. His wife is called Herodias and she hates John the Baptist. She wants John the Baptist dead. Mark 6:21 states,

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

Instead of "strategic day," the NIV says "opportune time." The New King James version says "opportune day." But I would translate the Greek word as "best time" or "the strategic time." So a strategic time came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee.

*. . . and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." Mark 6:22 (NASB)*

Next we are told that Herod's daughter tells her mother, Herodias, that she can ask for whatever she wishes. Herodias had a plan. The daughter returns to the banquet hall and asks for John the Baptist's head. The strategic day came. The strategic time came. Herodias saw the strategic opportunity to have John the Baptist killed. That is what this phrase "in

time" means. It is the best time. It is the opportune time.

Now if we return to Hebrews 4:16 we discover that we can receive mercy and grace to help us through the storm—at the strategic time, at the best time. You say, "The best time for me is right now!" God says "No, no, and no! The strategic time is My time for you. I know you better than you know yourself. I know what I want to accomplish in your life, and the strategic time is a little farther down the road."

I find that that is usually true in my life. I start complaining. I start asking for help, and God just waits. He waits! It might seem that He does not want to help me right away because—now watch this—the strategic time has not arrived. So we can come boldly to the throne of grace because He understands. We can ask for mercy, unmerited favor, and God will give it to us. He will give it to us at the strategic time, and usually it is to help us go through the storm, and not take us out.

**CONCLUSION.** I know I have been through many storms. I suspect that many of you have as well. The storm starts small, grows into a hurricane, and life seems impossible. But I make it through the storm, and I am a better person on the backside of that storm. These folks to whom the letter of Hebrews is written had gone through struggles. They had been through some real trials. Rather than leaving Jesus because the trials were difficult, they needed to hang in there. They needed to hold on. They needed to continue in their faith.

This study reminds us exactly how much God really cares for us. He is merciful and He is full of grace and He helps us at the right time.