

Coming Boldly Unto the Throne of Grace

The book of Hebrews was originally written to brethren who were growing weary in their battle against Satan's attacks. This is evidenced by passages such as Hebrews 12:12 in which Paul made reference to "the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." The book is filled with exhortations to continue in faithfulness lest, as happened in the case of Israel in the wilderness, "any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11). Among these exhortations was a reminder that God had made available to His people the use of two powerful tools by which they could remain strong in the faith; one tool was the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12) and the other tool was prayer (Hebrews 4:14-16).

In his inspired statements regarding prayer in these verses, Paul used a term that not only demands our attention, but which could dramatically improve the way we pray. Having spoken in Hebrews 4:14-15 of the fact that God is accessible to Christians in prayer by virtue of Jesus being the great high priest, the apostle wrote, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16). The word translated "boldly" means, "freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly." It is used several other times in the New Testament and, besides the English rendering here, is also translated "confidence" (I John 5:14), "openly" (John 18:20), "freely" (Acts 2:29) and "plainly" (John 11:14). The word does not suggest a brashness, as if when we pray we say, "Lord, I demand that you give me this or give me that." Instead, it indicates not only a confidence, but a plainness of speech when we go to God in prayer.

Notice how the usage of the word "boldly" follows what Paul wrote in Hebrews 4:13. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." There is nothing hidden from God. He sees and knows all. John wrote of Jesus that He "knew what was in man." (John 2:25). That being the case, Paul was exhorting Christians in verse 16 to hide nothing from God. Bare your soul to the Lord. Speak to Him plainly. Hold nothing back. What is on your heart and mind? Take it to the Lord in prayer. Don't dress it up in fancy words and phrases. Don't camouflage it with someone else's words found in a "prayer book." Express the very depths of your being to your Father. As Christians, we have this privilege because of Jesus Christ, our great high priest. That the Father welcomes the prayers of His saints is clear for in prayer we are going to "the throne of grace" where we may "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We are to go to God in reverence, of course, but we are also to go with confidence that the prayers offered according to His will are heard. With that confidence, we are to tell God plainly and openly what is on our hearts.

In light of what has just been discussed, how do our prayers measure up? If we were emotionally burdened and decided to visit a psychologist or a counselor, we would open up to that professional and let him or her know everything that was troubling us. When we go to doctors, we tell them all about our physical maladies and hold nothing back. With our best friends on earth we share our most intimate of thoughts. Are we that open with God in prayer? Why would we freely speak to our fellow humans, all of whom are limited in the help they can provide for us, and yet hold back when speaking to God? Undoubtedly all of us have on occasion literally spent hours talking to others about what's going on in our lives, sparing few details in the process. Hebrews 4:16 is an invitation from God Himself to speak to Him as openly and frankly as we know how and with no time limits. Our prayers don't have to be poetic masterpieces or prize winning prose. They have to be according to God's will (I John 5:14) and, with that as the standard, we are permitted to freely express ourselves to our Lord.

What a marvelous blessing God has given to His people to be allowed to speak to Him in this manner. We serve the one true God who welcomes the prayers of His saints any time of day or night and who will most assuredly provide help in our times of need.