

## Sermon #2497 — *Miscellaneous Sermons*

Title:        **THE BEST ASSIGNMENT**  
                  **I EVER HAD**

Text:        Hebrews 4:16

Subject:    *Prayer*

Date:        Sunday Evening — October 6, 2019

Readings: *Mark Medley and David Burge*

Introduction:

A few weeks ago I told you about the best assignment I ever had. In my junior year of college I took an elective class on prayer. One day our professor (Dr. Jack Claggett) gave us the assignment.

“Without consulting any commentary or other writings, over the course of the next week, I want you to write down everything that comes to your mind as you read and think about Hebrews 4:16.”

That was, without question, the best, most personally profitable assignment I ever had. After telling you about it a few weeks ago, I know that several of you began the assignment on your own. So, tonight, I want you to open your Bibles to

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Hebrews 4:16 and I will talk to you about — **THE BEST ASSIGNMENT I EVER HAD.**

Our text gives us instruction from our God about the blessed privilege of prayer. I do not pretend to know a great deal about the subject; but I do know what God has taught me and is teaching me.

**Prayer is one of the most important aspects of every believer's life. Yet, it is one with which we struggle constantly.** It is a subject about which there is enormous confusion, even among God's elect. I cannot think of a single text in Scripture which gives us more encouragement and reason to pray than Hebrews 4:16. Therefore, I will stick very close to my text.

But, before we look at the text, let me make some general comments about prayer, which I hope will be helpful to you.

- Private Prayer
- Family Prayer
- Public Prayer

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Now, let's look at our text.

(**Hebrews 4:16**) “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

### **A THRONE**

1<sup>st</sup> — Here is a throne. — “*The throne of grace.*” Once it was called “*the mercy seat,*” but now “*the throne.*” **In drawing near to God in prayer, we come God upon the throne.** No one approaches God who does not approach him upon the throne. He who is God almighty is that great and glorious Monarch of the universe who sits upon the throne of total, absolute sovereignty. **The throne of God is threefold.**

1. **His throne of Glory** — Oh, how little I know of that! The majesty, holiness, and awful presence of God is beyond my comprehension.
2. **His throne of Justice** — There, at his throne of justice, the great white throne of judgment, all

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shall one day stand. Everyone shall receive from God that which is his just due.

3. **His throne of Grace** — There the Man, Christ Jesus, my Forerunner and Mediator, sits. To this throne I boldly come and there my sins confess, knowing full well that in him and by him I shall obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**William Jay** once said, — “When God enacts laws, he is on a throne of legislation. When he administers these laws he is on a throne of government. When he tries his creatures by these laws, he is on a throne of judgment. But when he receives petitions and dispenses favors, he is on a throne of grace.”

**The idea of a throne inspires awe, bordering upon terror. It repels rather than invites.** Few of us could approach it without trembling. Yet, here is the throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords, who holds the scepter of total sovereignty, absolute holiness, and immutable justice. Before this great King the greatest earthly monarch that ever wore a

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crown is but a worm. Before him, all the nations of men are less than nothing and vanity. How dares any sinful man come to him who is infinite majesty?

**Blessed be his name, we come to him upon his throne because he sits upon a throne of grace.**

Therefore we are allowed, and even commanded, to come to it boldly.

**If we would come to God, we must come to him as a King upon a throne.**

- With Reverence
- With Confidence
- With Submission

Faith, in its essence and in all its exercises, is surrender to the Lord God as our great King.

**In prayer we come to this great King as to One who gives like a king.**

- We ask great things from the great King.
- We ask great things with expectation, because he is as magnanimously good as he is great.
- We ask great things because he is infinitely rich in grace and in power (Philippians 4:19).

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**He who is our God sits upon a “throne of grace.”**  
— This King sits on his throne on purpose, specifically to dispense grace. It is his design, his object in displaying himself as King, to dispense grace.

**It is in hearing the prayers of the needy and dispensing grace to the needy that our God and King is honored and glorified.** You will remember that this throne of grace is that which Isaiah saw (Isaiah 6). It was typified in the mercy-seat, which was upon the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, where atonement was made. It is this which John beheld in Revelation 4 and 5, where he saw the Lamb that had been slain.

- The Throne
- The Rainbow
- The Book
- The Lamb, As It Had Been Slain

(Revelation 5:9-14) “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of

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every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (11) And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; (12) Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (13) And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (14) And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

**It is here, in Christ, the crucified Lamb of God, sitting upon the throne, that we behold God's**

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**majesty and mercy, his justice and his grace, his truth and his goodness.**

(Exodus 25:17-18) “And thou shalt make a mercy seat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (18) And thou shalt make two cherubims *of* gold, *of* beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.”

(Exodus 25:22) “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

(Hebrews 9:1-12) “Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. (2) For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. (3) And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; (4)



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Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; (5) And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. (6) Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*. (7) But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people: (8) The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: (9) Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; (10) *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. (11) But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a

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greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us.*”

(Hebrews 10:19-22) “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

**The Lord God to whom we come and before whom we bow in prayer, even in hearing prayer, acts as a sovereign; but he is a sovereign whose sovereignty is the sovereignty of grace.** To the throne of the great God, poor sinners are bidden to come. Oh, what a privilege this is! We who come to

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the throne of grace have free audience with the King of Grace!

### **AN EXHORTATION**

2<sup>nd</sup> — Here is a gracious exhortation. — “*Let us therefore come.*”

**Be sure you don’t miss the “*therefore.*”** — The basis of this exhortation is fourfold. We are invited, urged, bidden, commanded, and exhorted to come to the throne of grace...

- because of the danger we face (Hebrews 4:11).
- because there is a rest to be had (Hebrews 4:9).
- because the God with whom we have to do knows all things (Hebrews 4:13).
- because we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens — “*Jesus the Son of God!*”

**This coming is a spiritual coming.** — This is an act of faith, an act of the heart. In such matters, there are **no rules to follow**, but the rules of reverent love, gratitude, and faith. **Posture is meaningless.**

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**Affectation is horrible.** Prayer, like all acts of worship, is spiritual. It is more an attitude than an act. Yet, it is an act...

- inspired by the promise of God.
- seeking the will of God.
- motivated by the glory of God.

### **Who is it that here urges us to prayer?**

- It is a man like ourselves, a sinner saved by grace, an experienced believer who had often proved the value of prayer to his own soul.
- This call comes from the whole church of God.
- God's saints, needing one another's prayers, urge one another to prayer and help one another in prayer.
- This call comes to us from God the Holy Ghost, for the apostle spoke by inspiration.

The Spirit, making intercession in us, says, "Let us come." Let us not be indifferent to this sympathetic call. At once let us draw near to God.

## **AN ADVERB**

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3<sup>rd</sup> — Here is a blessed adverb. — “*Let us come **boldly**.*” Did I read that right? Does God the Holy Ghost call for us to come boldly to the throne of grace? He does indeed! Not proudly, presumptuously, or demandingly. Yet he does say, “*boldly*.”

**We may and should come to the throne of our God boldly because it is the throne of grace.** I once read that when Martin Luther prayed, he did so with as much reverence as if he were praying to an infinite God, and with as much familiarity as if he were speaking to his nearest friend.

**This word “boldly” implies liberty without restraint** (Acts 2:29; 4:13). We have liberty to speak our minds freely; to speak all our heart, our wills, our needs, our fears, and even our complaints. As others may not bind us in speaking to God by prescribing what words we should use, so we need not restrain ourselves, but freely speak all that our hearts and condition may require.

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A man once came Augustus with a request, but came with so much fear and trembling that the emperor cried, “What, man! do you think you are giving a sop to an elephant?” The emperor was insulted by the man’s apparent thoughts that he was a hard and cruel ruler.

**Can you imagine how such cringing before God insults our heavenly Father?** When men pray with a slavish bondage and dread, with cold, cringing phrases, and a crouching solemnity, they might well be rebuked. — Are you coming to a tyrant? Holy boldness, a blessed, childlike hope and confidence, is the proper attitude of the believer’s heart before God.

**Remember, we come to the throne of grace, not to Sinai’s mount, but to Zion’s hill, through the merits of Christ, before our Father in heaven.** We should, therefore, come boldly.

- It is the throne of grace. Therefore, **our faults will be forgiven.**
- It is the throne of grace. Therefore, **the faults of our prayers will be overlooked.**

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- It is the throne of grace. Therefore, **our petitions will be properly interpreted.**

(Romans 8:26) “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

- It is the throne of grace. Therefore, our **miseries will be pitied.**
- It is the throne of grace. Therefore, **our needs will be supplied.**

**What does this word “boldly” suggest?** By this adverb, “*boldly*,” the Holy Spirit means for us to understand that —

- We may come **constantly**, at all times.
- We may come **unreservedly**, with all sorts of petitions.
- We may come **freely**, with simple words.
- We may come **hopefully**, with full confidence of being heard.

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- We may come **fervently**, with importunity of pleading.

### **A BLESSING**

4<sup>th</sup> — Here is a blessing supplied. — “*Let us therefore come.*” — “*That we may obtain mercy, and find grace;*” not that we may utter good words but may actually obtain blessings.

**Francis Havergal** wrote, “Obtaining mercy comes first; then finding grace to help in time of need. You cannot reverse God’s order. You will not find grace to help in time of need till you have sought and found mercy to save. You have no right to reckon on God’s help and protection and guidance, and all the other splendid privileges which he promises to ‘*the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ,*’ until you have this first blessing, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; for it is ‘*in*’ Jesus Christ that all the promises of God are ‘*yea and Amen.*’”



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- We may come when we need great mercy, because of our sin.
- We may come when we have little grace.
- We may come when we are in great need of more grace.

### **There are many reasons for us to come boldly and at once to the throne of grace.**

1. Our character urges us. We are invited to come for “*mercy*,” and therefore undeserving sinners may come.
2. The character of God encourages us to be bold.
3. Our relation to him as children gives us great freedom.
4. The Holy Spirit’s guidance draws us near the throne.
5. God’s promises invite us by their greatness, freeness, and sureness.
6. Christ is already given to us, and therefore God will deny us nothing (Romans 8:32).
7. Former mercies and grace given us from the throne give us solid confidence to expect mercy and grace from our God.

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**The great reason for all this is Christ himself.**

1. He once was slain, and the mercy-seat is sprinkled with his sin-atonement blood.
  2. He is risen and has justified us by his righteousness.
  3. He has ascended and taken possession of all covenant blessings on our behalf. Let us ask for that which is our own in him.
  4. He is sympathetic, tender, and careful for us. — We must be heard.
  5. The humble faith of the believing heart, seeking mercy and grace from God, through Christ Jesus, honors God.
- Let us come to the throne, with all our sinfulness, to find mercy.
  - Let us come to the throne, with all our weakness, to find help.
  - Let us come to the throne, in all our trials and temptations, to find grace.

(1 Corinthians 10:13) “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be

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tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*. ”

(Matthew 6:5-15) “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (7) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. (8) Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (9) After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. (10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our

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debtors. (13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (14) For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Amen.