

## An Introduction to NEARNESS

Hebrews 4:16

October 8, 2023

**Hebrews 4:14-16** *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. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

**INTRO...** Remembering that these 'Hebrews' are people doing life in regular life spaces!

...This passage is going to introduce us to something that Satisfies the Soul—but doesn't necessarily always change the circumstances!

### **NEARNESS 101** (an intro to the Presence of God)

**...If I've got a weak understanding of "nearness & farness", then this verse won't reach me the way it needs to. You won't engage the "Let us ..." "Draw Near"**

...The Problem with "Over Applying Some Thoughts about God"

- **"Nearness & Farness" ...The God who is "Omnipresent" and is known to be "Everywhere-All-the-Time" ...is Also Said to be "NEAR" and to "MANIFEST His Presence"**
  - **"Nearness & SALVATION"**
    - Salvation/Justification/Acceptance—Are Not Measured in Spatial, Incremental Terms
    - **BUT ...the Concept of "NEARNESS" is a real concept. ...These Hebrews are Concerningly TOO FAR from Something about God** ...this concept of "Saved-but-Distant" seems to be the continual concern in Hebrews
      - Heb 2:1** *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*
      - Heb 3:1** *Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...*
      - Heb 4:1** *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*
      - Heb 4:16** *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...*
  - ...These represent concepts of "Distance"—a sense of "Farness" rather than "Nearness"
  - **"Nearness & Spiritual EXPERIENCE"**
    - **Considering the "Manifest Presence of God (vs. the Omnipresence)**  
Moses... The Upper Room at Pentecost ...The Woman & the Crowd
      - Lk 8:40-46** *Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ...<sup>44</sup> ...As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. <sup>43</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."*

- v. 45, 46 ... “Who touched me?” ... “Someone touched me [in such a way] that power has gone out from me” ...There was an EXCHANGE! That woman “RECEIVED” Something!
  - v.16 “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace” ...THIS is the “Drawing Near” that Heb 4:16 is describing!
- She “DREW NEAR” ...while the Crowd was “Just NEARBY” Jesus!

**...Churches are FILLED with CROWDS!! ...who are “Nearby Jesus” but they’re NOT Having an EXCHANGE!! ...They Have NOT DRAWN NEAR!!**

- **Considering the “Filling of the Holy Spirit (vs. the Indwelling)** ...This has to do with the question of— Are We LOOKING to Receive Something from God... or are we “Saved but Stagnant” Experientially?

**SGC Statement of Faith: *The Filling of the Spirit***

When Christ ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit on the church, ushering in a greater experience of God’s presence and power among his people. The Spirit transforms hearts by the miracle of regeneration and indwells all believers in abundant, new covenant measure. The Spirit also desires to fill God’s people continually with increased power for Christian life and witness. To be filled with the Spirit is to be more fully under his influence, more aware of his presence, and more effective in his service. All Christians, therefore, must continually seek to be filled with the Spirit by living and praying in such a way that invites the Spirit’s work among us, actively longing for God to accomplish his gracious purposes in us and through us. The filling of the Spirit brings to God’s people a deeper knowledge of Christ, an increased desire for holiness, a stronger commitment to unity and love, a greater fruitfulness in ministry, and a deeper gratitude for our salvation.

**Acts 4:31** *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

**Eph 5:18-21** *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,<sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,<sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

...The N.T. presents the "Filling of the Holy Spirit" in a way similar to what Hebrews says about "Drawing Near" ...it is instructing us to "Do something" and to be Intentionally Postured to Receive Something!

- **“Nearness and Personal PERSPECTIVE” ...this “Nearness or Farness” will shape the way you think about God and Life!**

**Psalms 73** *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.*

<sup>2</sup> *But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.*

<sup>3</sup> *For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

<sup>4</sup> *For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.*

<sup>5</sup> *They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.*

<sup>6</sup> *Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.*

<sup>7</sup> *Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. ...*

*...<sup>12</sup> Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.*

<sup>13</sup> *All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.*

*...<sup>16</sup> But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,*

<sup>17</sup> *until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.*

*...<sup>21</sup> When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,*

- <sup>22</sup> *I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.*  
<sup>23</sup> *Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.*  
<sup>24</sup> *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.*  
<sup>25</sup> *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*  
<sup>26</sup> *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*  
<sup>27</sup> *For behold, those who are **far from you** shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*  
<sup>28</sup> *But for me it is good to be **near God**; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.*

"This may be where you are. You are in him. You are adopted into the Father's family. You have the very divine life in you, the Holy Spirit. You are loved and accepted in Christ. You know about these things, and yet at another level you don't know them, you don't grasp them. You are still dogged by your bad habits, often anxious or bored or discouraged or angry. You may have many specific problems and issues that need to be faced and dealt with through various specific means. Yet the root problem of them all is that you are rich in Christ but nevertheless living poor." **Tim Keller**, "Prayer", p. 168

...This is a description of "Farness"!! ...

- **What remedies this noisy soul?** ...The Nearness of God (Ps 73:17, 28)

"It is possible for Christians to live their lives with a high degree of phoniness, hollowness, and inauthenticity. The reason is because they have failed to move that truth into their hearts and therefore it has not actually changed who they are and how they live. ...Blaise Pascal was a Christian believer and philosopher and one of the great minds of history. When he died it was discovered that he had sewn into the inner lining of his coat the description of an experience he had had one night. It read: "In the year 1654, Monday, twenty third November, from about half past ten in the evening until half an hour after midnight ...FIRE... God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, and not of the philosophers and of the learned. Certainty. Certainty. Feeling. Joy. Peace." Pascal was not talking about a sight of literal flames but of an experience of the presence of God—what fire in the Bible so often represents. He had believed in God, but when he said he met the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—not the 'God of the philosophers'—he meant he now knew in the heart what he had known in the abstract. ...Another, less famous example is Dwight L. Moody, a prominent Chicago minister and evangelist in the late nineteenth century. He wrote: 'One day in the city of New York--oh what a day!--I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name... I can only say that God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand.' It wasn't that Moody was not a Christian or that he had never known Christ's love and presence. Perhaps we could say that the objective reality of who he was in Christ and the inward subjective experience came together." **Tim Keller**, "Prayer", p. 167

## **"Let US Draw Near"**

...This is a command. It is an action that we take that is described as a factor in our forthcoming experience—  
**"that we may receive mercy and grace to help in time of need"** — Experiencing some type of Mercy & Grace is on the other side of something that WE DO!

**NOTICE:** *In Scripture: "There is a "Mercy & Grace" that pursues us [runs us down, even when we're running away from God and putting greater distance between us and Him!!] ... and... a "Mercy & Grace" that we pursue.*

**Ps 23:6** *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow [‘pursue’, ‘chase’] me all the days of my life,*

**Ps 139:7-8** *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

<sup>8</sup> *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

**Rom 9:15-16** For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

**What does this mean and what does it imply for us?**

- **You Can Be Justified, Righteous (100%), and an Accepted Child of God ...and be "Too Far Away" from God! ...There is something about our Walk with God that can be "Near" or "Far"!!**
  
- **That the Bible teaches us the value of "vigorous pursuit" of God**  
**James 4:8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

**Jer 29:11-13** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."

**Is. 55:6-7** Seek the LORD while he may be found call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.