

**Image:** *When I think of the superheroes in comic books and in the movies when I was growing up, one word comes to mind. Other. They were something, but not really human. They didn't struggle with weakness, or emotions, or other things like I do and did. But have you noticed that, today, our heroes are becoming more human? Batman is scared of bats, Spiderman is a dork, and Superman can't get a date. The Incredibles are a family flirting with dysfunction, and the X-Men are immature ego-maniacs. There seems to be something about us in these days that wants our superheroes to be more human. We don't want to think of them as "other." We want them to relate to us and the difficulties that we face.*

**Need:** Think about the things you face on a daily basis. Difficulty in standing firm in your faith at work. Maybe you're struggling to be sacrificial in your marriage. Perhaps the expectations of others are weighing you down to the point you can't move. Maybe your health is failing. All these things can cause us to want to throw in the towel. To walk away. Maybe not to walk away altogether, but maybe to take 1 step away from God in one particular area...because it's just too hard. In the heat of the battle, we need someone to look to for encouragement and support. For courage...and help. And we don't want someone so "super" that he doesn't understand what we're dealing with, but who can sympathize.

**Context:** The author of Hebrews has gone to great lengths to tell us that Jesus is that kind of superhero. He is God. But He was also human. He stands outside of creation as Lord of all. And yet, for a time, He entered creation to experience life with us and experience death for us. This text serves as a bridge. We've just ended the first main section and we're entering into the second main section of the book. Jesus as superior priest. This text is also a snapshot of the entire sermon. This is the forest. And so here he gives us an admonition. To all who are tired and weary. who feel like giving up. We don't have a hero who can't relate to us, but who knows what it's like to suffer as human: The God-Man, Jesus.

**Preview:** How do we hold up in the heat of the battle when we feel like giving in?

I. In light of Jesus, stand in confidence. **INDUCTIVELY AT B**

A. Consider the reality of the One on your side (v. 14-15)

1. "GREAT High Priest" – indicates superiority above all. There is no one greater than Him
2. "Passed through the Heavens" – Jewish thought held that there were realms of Heaven. Some said 7. Paul mentioned a 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven in **2 Cor. 12**. Jesus went through them all...He's at the right hand of God. Consider that the earthly HP was only allowed to go into a copy of the presence of God for a brief time of one day, once a year. More on this in **chapters 8-9**.
3. "Son of God" – Jesus is the transcendent God of the universe. How's that for confidence?
4. He's a sympathizer (v. 15a). He is not just transcendent, but experienced life with us. And so He can sympathize with the fact that we are weak and struggle with life from time to time. He's not some angry father that we have to struggle to impress, but a compassionate Savior who knows what it's like to struggle.

B. **Stand firm in confident faith (v. 14b)**

1. The world and circumstances constantly bombard us to take our eyes off of Jesus. For the recipients of this letter, that was the temptation: to give up and surrender because of external pressure. We daily face pressure to succumb to sin and turn away. He says, "**hold fast the confession of faith.**" It means to hold onto a commitment you've made. Basically, it means to keep living the life of belief even though it costs you something.
2. But, with the reality of who Jesus is planted firmly in your mind...be courageous. Jesus said in **Luke 12**, *don't be afraid of them...all they can do is kill you*. Paul said in **Romans 8**, *if God is for us, who can be against us?* Or Peter in **1 Peter** that *suffering for good finds favor with God*. Or here in **chapter 13** when he quotes **Psalms 118**, *the Lord is my helper, I won't be afraid, what can man do to me? Ad infinitum*.
  - a. All through the history of the Church we see guys and ladies willing to give up their lives in horrible ways because they had a clear picture in their minds as to who Jesus was.
  - b. The Apostles, the martyrs. And many more.
    - i. How about *Martin Luther who stood before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and was asked to recant his positions. He said, "I cannot and will not recant, for to go against conscious is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen."*

- ii. How about *Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Hitler's Germany. He was a pastor who fled Germany and then went back to help his people in the resistance movement. His best sermon was his last one. After he gave it in prison, he was taken off, tried, and condemned and, the next morning, was executed.*
- c. All these did bc they understood who Jesus was. The great Son of God who had secured eternal salvation. Think you don't have the stuff? Think again...and think about Jesus.

*(Sometimes courage isn't enough. Sometimes we just plain need help to make it through)*

II. In light of Jesus, go to God for help. **INDUCTIVELY AT B**

A. Consider further what it means that Jesus can sympathize (v. 15)

- 1. He knows what it's like for us to struggle with temptation because He was tempted to.
- 2. He was tempted "**in every way.**" What does this mean? *Obviously Jesus didn't struggle with the internet or with committing insurance fraud.* So, just because He didn't experience the exact same things that we do doesn't mean He can't sympathize. In fact, He experienced temptation in a much more severe way than we ever will because He was perfect. He went all the way with it. *Mike Tyson, boxer, used to knock everyone out in round 1. That's us. Jesus went the distance.* He endured the brunt force of it as far as it could go. Let's look further.
  - a. If we consider the crux of XC's temptations, they were very similar to ours. In Jesus' encounter with Satan in wilderness, essential question/temptation is: *Will Jesus try to take the crown without the cross. Will He circumvent God's plan out of His own self-interest.*
    - i. So Satan tempts Him with bread to see if He'll act independently of God's direction.
    - ii. With jumping off the Temple to see if He'll insist God protect Him.
    - iii. With the promise of the Kingdoms of the earth if He'll worship Satan to see if He'll defect and worship someone else for His own gain.

So Satan tried to get Jesus to change the rules and accomplish God's plan (that all the kingdoms of the earth would worship Him) apart from the way God had planned it. This is why Jesus rebukes Peter so harshly later in the Gospels when Peter suggests that he won't let Him be taken to the cross. Because Jesus knows that He can't circumvent the plan of God. **There has to be a cross if there is to be a crown.** This is why night spent praying in the Garden is so intense, because Jesus must submit Himself to God's plan though it will hurt. Satan wanted Jesus to act like God should act. To take what was rightfully His with the force that He rightfully had. Jesus said, I'll do it God's way (*Dostoevsky, Brothers Karamazov, Ivan's poem, Inquisitor arrests Jesus for not acting like God.*)

- b. In fact, if you consider the specific temptation in mind here in Hebrews, it's the same temptation Jesus endured, at its core. *The temptation to cut and run when things got tough.*
  - i. They were being tempted to leave the faith because of the threat of persecution.
  - ii. The crux of the Garden was Jesus' plea to not have to go through it. "**Take this cup from me...but not my will but yours be done.**" Essentially, Jesus prays for the very thing the author here tells these guys to go to God for...**HELP!** In fact, Jesus goes to His disciples and tells them they should be praying for God's help too, so they don't fall into the temptation to cut and run. What do they do? They fall asleep...and then fall away. Thankfully they're restored, but they missed out on God's help bc they didn't ask. So Jesus endured the temptation to do things His way, without pain by calling to God for help. *That's exactly what he says here...*

B. **In light of Jesus shared experience, continually go to God for help (v. 16)**

- 1. **Approach the throne of grace** – continual aspect. Make it a continual practice. We can "**go with boldness**" because we are related to Him now. We are His kids. *Me shyly asking other kids dads for stuff.* We have bold, continual, permanent access directly to God bc of our HP. We go boldly before the only one with the authority and the ability to help us.
- 2. Here's what we get...**mercy, grace, and timely help.** Mercy when we've fallen, grace to get through what's coming, and in it all, help that arrives just when we need it most.

- a. At this point it's incumbent on me to remind you that Jesus died on a cross. You might say, "If that's your definition of timely help, no thanks." Going to God for timely help doesn't mean He's going to remove all difficulty from your life. That's another sermon for another day. But sometimes God's help doesn't come in the way we think. I think these guys do go on to suffer. For them, I think the timely help will probably be courage in the moment they need it to stand up for their faith at a time when it will cost them dearly. Again, our prayer is that God would give us the stuff to submit to His will no matter what...that's what Jesus did. You go to God for help and you'll get it.
- b. It may be miraculous deliverance. But it may be the courage to die well. How about that? Welcome to Galway City Church. You get God's help to suffer well for His glory.

*(So how do we hold up in the heat of battle when we feel like giving in?)*

III. We look to our Champion for resolve and resource.

- A. Looking to Him as sovereign God of universe, our ultimate security, we hold fast and don't quit.
- B. Looking to Him as the One who struggled with temptation like we do, and made it through, we go to God for help when we feel like giving in. We pray...continually. When you trust God, you pray. People who pray know that they are incapable of overcoming the obstacles in front of them. You pray. You enter into His presence with the boldness that comes from being in His family, and you ask Him for help to make it through whatever you're going through to His glory. *And the great thing is that He invites us there. You know, like Adam, we tend to think of God's throne as a place of judgment and run from it. But God, for those who have believed in Jesus for salvation from sin, the throne is a place of grace because we are now His family in Christ.*

**Conc.:** Ernest Shackleton, Antarctic explorer, departed South Georgia Island off the coast of south America on December 5, 1914 with 28 men hoping to be the first man to cross the continent of Antarctica. Little did he know that the next time he would touch land would be 497 days later on the very same island. after only a month, the ship became trapped in the pack ice surrounding Antarctica. All they had was 3 life boats, some dogs, and a lot of food...oh, and the genius of Shackleton himself. For the next 497 days, Shackleton would lead all 28 of his men off the pack ice and, eventually, back to safety. in the diaries of his crew, nearly to a man, all would say that their resolve was lifted because they considered Shackleton was in control of the situation and were confident in his ability to lead them out. Also, nearly to a man, they acknowledged how Shackleton helped them to overcome the difficulties they would face. Shackleton was a source of resolve and resource for his men.