

Hebrews 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Analysis

Following the revelation of Christ's sympathetic high priesthood (v. 15), this verse issues an urgent exhortation to approach God with confidence. The word 'proserchōmetha' (προσερχώμεθα, 'let us come') is a present subjunctive encouraging continuous, habitual approach—not isolated visits but ongoing communion. The adverb 'meta parrēsias' (μετὰ παρρησίας, 'boldly' or 'with confidence') denotes the freedom of speech enjoyed by citizens addressing their ruler, contrasting sharply with the fear and trembling required for approaching God under the old covenant (Exodus 19:12-13, Hebrews 12:18-21). The 'throne of grace' (θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος, thronō tēs charitos) emphasizes God's character in receiving petitioners—this is not a throne of judgment but of unmerited favor where grace reigns (Romans 5:21). The dual purpose is specified: 'receive mercy' (λάβωμεν ἔλεος, labōmen eleos) addresses past failures, obtaining forgiveness and compassion, while 'find grace to help' (χάριν εὕρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν, charin heurōmen eis eukairon boētheian) provides present and future assistance—grace arriving at the opportune moment, precisely timed divine aid. The phrase 'in time of need' (εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν, eis eukairon boētheian) literally means 'for well-timed help,' assuring believers that God's grace is neither early nor late but perfectly calibrated to their need.

Historical Context

In the Levitical system, the high priest alone could enter God's presence in the Most Holy Place, and only once annually on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur),

bearing sacrificial blood (Leviticus 16). Unauthorized approach resulted in death (Leviticus 10:1-2, 16:2). Common Israelites were restricted to the outer courts, separated from God's presence by multiple barriers—curtains, courts, and priestly mediation. This created a pervasive sense of distance from God that characterized old covenant worship. The author of Hebrews, writing before the temple's destruction (AD 70), contrasts this restricted access with the new covenant privilege granted through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. His blood opened the way into the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19-22), tearing the veil (Matthew 27:51) and granting all believers direct access to God's throne. For Jewish Christians tempted to return to temple worship's familiarity, this verse declares Christianity's radical superiority—no more mediating priests, no more annual ceremonies, no more fearful distance. Instead, believers can approach God directly, continually, and confidently because of Christ's perfect priesthood and sufficient sacrifice.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the invitation to 'come boldly' contrast with common feelings of unworthiness or fear when praying?
2. What practical difference should it make that we approach a 'throne of grace' rather than a throne of judgment?
3. In what specific circumstances do you most need to remember God's invitation to approach with confidence?
4. How does understanding Christ's sympathetic priesthood (v. 15) enable bold approach to God (v. 16)?
5. What does 'grace to help in time of need' reveal about God's timing and provision in our lives?

Interlinear Text

προσερχώμεθα	οὖν	μετὰ	παρρησίας	τῷ	θρόνῳ			
Let us	therefore	boldly			unto the throne			
G4334	G3767	G3326	G3954	G3588	G2362			
τῆς	χάριν	ἵνα	λάβωμεν	ἐλεον,	καὶ	χάριν	εὕρωμεν	εἰς
	grace	that	we may obtain	mercy	and	grace	find	in
G3588	G5485	G2443	G2983	G1656	G2532	G5485	G2147	G1519
εὐκαιρον	βοήθειαν							
time of need	to help							
G2121	G996							

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 3:12 (Parallel theme): In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Hebrews 7:25 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 13:6 (Parallel theme): So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

1 Peter 2:10 (Grace): Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Ephesians 2:18 (Parallel theme): For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Hebrews 7:19 (Parallel theme): For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Leviticus 16:2 (Grace): And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

Hebrews 9:5 (Grace): And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

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