



Call for Help

Reaching Out to Christ When Life is Caving In

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Again, I recently saw one of those commercials with the flowing stream and the salmon swimming upstream and the big grizzly bear wading in the whitewater trying to grab his lunch. And I was reminded of the Christian life.

Because let's face it, in the Scripture, it's very clear that we as Christians are called out. That's what the word church means. People that are called out from the rest. And God puts us on a direction that basically is against the flow of traffic. Would you admit that's the case, right?

And then we're still stuck in these frail, fallen human bodies that get tired day after day of swimming upstream. And then add to that the 1 Peter 5 reality that we have an enemy that the Scripture describes as a roaring enemy who's looking to eat us for lunch. And what you're left with is a picture of the Christian life that's difficult. It's just flat out difficult.

As a matter of fact, if we think through the details of that, you can admit that it's definitely easier to be impulsive than it is to be patient. It's easier to be vindictive than it is to be forgiving. It's easier to be critical than it is to be prayerful. It's easier to be selfish than sacrificial. It's easier to be envious than content. Christian life is definitely difficult.

But I trust that you know that you didn't choose to live the Christian life because it was easy. You, from your perspective, chose the Christian life because it's right. Because God called us to walk a path that is right. And though the dividends aren't always paid out immediately, in the long run, we know that God is a generous rewarder of those that seek him and those that walk this narrow path that sometimes gets pretty steep and it's tough. Christian life will be rewarded.

But in the meantime, as we've pointed out often, Jesus said it's going to be tough. The great news is that in the difficulties and the weariness of the Christian life that sometimes sets in, God has said to us, "I'm here to help."

In this great passage in Hebrews chapter 4—we're going to pay that bill eventually—is that God is saying to us, listen, you've got to avail yourself to the help that is readily available and that Christ says, "I want to give you every day in the Christian life."

And these are encouraging words. We've already seen them in their rhetorical context, but I'd like you to look at Hebrews chapter 4 just from a devotional context today, and just to be reminded that if you're tired, that if you are tempted, if sometimes you just want to quit or give up, here's a great passage of Scripture for us just to dwell on this week, and to say God has got help, help for us to keep us going, major help, that we would be foolish to disregard or not see as a great advantage in the Christian life.

Take a look at these verses in Hebrews chapter 4, and if you're tired or hurt, perhaps this will be an encouragement to you as we try to unpack these three short verses.

Starting in verse 14, we're after this great discussion about our accountability to God, the importance to be submitted to the Word of God. He says, therefore, since we have a great high priest who's gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith that we



profess. For we don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weakness. We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace—I love this—to help us in our time of need.

Had any time of need lately? If you haven't had one this week, you'll have one next week. They're just around the corner. They're always there. Let us avail ourselves to the help.

And the help comes specifically in this text in verse number 14 through our great high priest. That's a great phrase. Just underline that. And then on your worksheet, if you found it in your worship packet, jot this down. It's important for us first of all to value our helper. Value your helper.

You and I have a helper, and he's specified in Scripture as a sympathetic, empathetic high priest. As a matter of fact, he's called in this text a great high priest. And I love that about it.

There is in Judaism a set of elite, if you will, who are very important in God's economy, the priesthood. And you know all about that. You remember the picture of Aaron and the high priestly garb and the temple and the outer court and the inner court and the Holy of Holies. And you're familiar with that, I trust. But you do know there was only one that basically ruled over the rest. He was called the high priest. Sometimes in the older translations, he's called the chief priest.

Because in Greek, in the New Testament, we talk about that. It's just the word. It's the word priest, and then it has a prefix that's the word arch, like archangel. You've heard that? He is the guy.

In the New Testament, we find him as the president and presiding member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. And he was the head honcho among all the priests who were already revered as this very important and superlative class in Judaism.

And in the Old Testament, we see that he is able to enter into the very presence of God, the symbolic presence of God, in this little cubed room called the Holy of Holies, where the box of the covenant, the box of the promise was. And he could enter into that little tiny room to represent the people one day out of the year, the day Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. And after all this ritualistic sacrifice and all this cleansing, he walked in to represent before God the people of Israel. Accept them. Be good to Israel. And then he had to quickly scurry out of the room.

This text says in verse number 14 that we have a great high priest. And we have the prefix in Greek, arch, but we also have another word added to it. And you know this word in English. The Greek word is *megas*. We get the word mega from it. I just love the wording. He's the mega arch priest. He's the great and powerful high priest.

And he has gone through the heavens. He hasn't walked into a little symbolic room to represent the people to God. He's gone through the heavens. He now has access to the Father and brings in his people behind him and says, I now want to represent the people. And I want to represent Jim, and I want to represent Tammy, and I want to represent John, and I want to represent Tom. He brings in the people. And he says, those that are mine I represent.

And he becomes the intercessor. Not an intercessor that quickly scurries into a box under all the guise of all this religious ceremony once a year, but he stands there every day before the Father interceding for us as the great high priest who's gone through the heavens and now stands—or more



specifically in the book of Hebrews, he's seated—in the very presence of God. What a great picture that is.

And that helper stands there ready to help.

The text says in this particular passage, one thing that we're hit with is that he's sympathetic to us. Verse number 15. He's not unable to sympathize with our weakness, but he has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin. He's sympathetic to the troubles we face.

Now, you could say that, I suppose, about an omniscient God, that God knows his people and can feel with them. But now you have someone who represents us and is ready to help us through the trials of the Christian life, who historically we can look back on and say, you have been here.

I mean, we sit here and say, well, it's hard to do the right thing. And Christ can say, yeah, I know. And you say, well, sometimes if I do the right thing, it takes me a couple steps back and I'll lose a client or I'll lose face or what have you. And Christ says, I know exactly what you're talking about. Read the Gospels. I've been there.

But sometimes, God, if I do the right things, people misunderstand and they impugn my motives anyway. Jesus says, I know what that's all about. I've lived through that.

You say, God, I'm just tired of living the Christian life because sometimes I get stabbed in the back and people betray me. Jesus says, I know exactly what that's like. I can see the person. I can feel it. I know what it's like to be sold out.

See, Jesus has walked the path that you and I walk. And everything that you and I are tempted to do in terms of sin and giving up and just saying, I can't swim upstream anymore, Jesus knows exactly what you're talking about, and I'm here to help.

The whole text is about finding that merciful and gracious help from Christ. But again, he's not just a sympathetic helper; he is the powerful helper.

Look at verse 15, after it says he's a high priest who's able to sympathize, but he's a kind of high priest that never sinned. He was perfect. As a matter of fact, he's called in verse number 14 the Son of God. Now that's pretty helpful. And we have on our side someone who can do just about anything to help us.

Keep your finger here in this text, if you would, and go to Matthew, Matthew chapter 8. And I love that because I think about the trials that I face and the heartache that I face and the trouble in the Christian life that I face. And you've got your own list. And I think about the fact that here I've got someone committed to me in Hebrews chapter 4 saying, I want to help you. I'd like to help you walk this path. And the great news is he's not just sympathetic. He's all powerful. He's the Son of God.

Take a look at this text. You remember the story, I'm sure, in verse number 23 in Matthew chapter 8 when his disciples and Christ, they got in a boat. And without warning, verse number 24, a furious storm came up on the lake so that the waves swept over the boat, but Jesus was sleeping.



Interestingly enough, verse 25, the disciples went and woke him saying, Lord, save us. We're going to drown. Help us, please.

And Jesus replied, you of little faith. Why are you so afraid? Well, because there's a furious storm that's about to kill us. That's my answer, right? There's plenty of reason here. But the point was you should know everything's fine because you got Christ in the boat.

He gets up, he rebukes the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm. And the men were amazed, and they asked, What kind of man is this, that even the wind and the waves obey him?

Well, it's a special kind of man. It's the incarnation of the Creator of heaven and earth. That's so encouraging to me. Not because that's the common response of Christ to my troubles. Hey, I got troubles, God. Can you take care of them for me? You know, everything's taken care of. He slaughters the enemies or calms the storm. He doesn't do that every time.

But it's great to know the one that walks with me and wants to help, he can do that. Isn't that helpful to know he's all powerful? If you want to eradicate that cancer out of your body, he could do it in a heartbeat, agreed? If he wanted to fix your marriage and make it the best one on planet earth, he could clap his hands and it's done. He could take your kids that you're all concerned about that aren't behaving quite right and say, no problem, if I can make the waves obey, I can certainly get your kids to obey.

We've got an all-powerful God that's got the ability to do that. And he's saying, I want to help you. He's powerful and he's empathetic.

But do not think that he's a genie in a bottle because you know, as I do, when we face the storms of life, it's not his common response to simply say, well, let's just fix all your problems.

Number two on your outline, let's take a look again through these verses and see something about the kind of help that he does bring. He brings a help that's focused on a couple of things, and there's some great clues in verses 14 and 15.

The bottom of verse number 14, bracket these words, if you would, it says that we want to have this sense of accomplishment or progress in the Christian life because we've got a great high priest that's there for us, and so we should—here's the purpose clause in the bottom of verse 14—got to hold firmly to the faith we profess. The point of at least verse 14 is that I don't give up on the Christian life. I don't give up on this confidence in God.

And then in verse number 15, it says that Christ is able to sympathize with our weakness, a weakness, by the way, he doesn't want us to give into because like, unlike us, he was tempted, but didn't sin. And the point is he didn't want us to give into sin.

What we need to recognize is that Christ is here to help us, but not like the genie in the bottle that wants to make all your problems go away. The goal of our helper is a little bit different. It's actually the best kind of help.

Number two on your outline, let's jot that down and explore it a little bit. Number two, we need to recognize that we can expect the best help. And the best help is not the help that always feels the best right out of the gate.



Here's a great proverb to jot down, and I know you've used it at least in your mind a few times. Proverbs chapter 13, verse number 24, that says that he who spares the rod hates his son. Remember that passage? When you're standing in line at the supermarket, you think of this often. He who loves his son is careful to discipline his son.

We understand that the best kind of help isn't always the help that feels the best. Because what God is looking for in our lives is to help us hold firmly to the faith and avoid temptation. To be godly people would be a good way to put it.

What he wants in you and what he wants in me is what he chided the disciples for on the ocean, on the lake, the Sea of Galilee, and that's a lack of faith. He wants us to be resilient in our faith, and he wants us to be bold and resilient in avoiding and resisting temptation.

That sounds good, but it doesn't always feel good. And that's the problem with the help that God wants to give.

There's a lot of people packing the biggest churches in the country. We talked about some on Thursday night, and I'm not going to repeat that because I got in trouble for that. But on Thursday night, you'll have to get the tape. We'll edit it carefully probably and get that out of it.

We talked about some of these big churches in the country that just absolutely pull the masses in, all on a pitch that's firmly unbiblical, as though God were the genie in the bottle that somehow just wants to give you what you want.

God is a God who doesn't want to just give you what you want. He's more concerned, rather, with giving you what you need. And that doesn't always feel good.

Because, for instance, if I'm to hold firmly to the faith and not give in to temptation, that means that I am going to be someone who has to continue to do good even when I don't feel like it.

Here's a great text, and it's always one that I think should be remembered by every Christian in the daily drudgery of trying to continue to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil as we try to move forward in the Christian life. 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 13.

And I love the way Paul put it to the Thessalonians. He says, and brothers, never tire of doing what's right. And it is so hard for us sometimes when we look at how the right thing and the righteous thing and the godly thing often just brings us more and more grief. And we think, if I could just do the wrong thing for a week with impunity, maybe I could fix everything in my life. And God's saying, no, no, no, just don't get tired of doing the right thing.

Persevering through the pangs of temptation, resisting the urge to retaliate. Think about that. Think about Jesus saying on the Sermon on the Mount, if someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him your other cheek. Let him have at that. That's wonderful, right? It's not fun. It doesn't feel good.

And yet God says, listen, what I want from you is to be a godly person.



And the most godly person, the perfect godly person, Jesus himself, who was tempted in every way yet without sin, was characterized by his onlookers as someone who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

The bottom line is that the payoff of the Christian life is largely in the next. It's not in this one.

And it's important for us to realize that the goal for God in our lives and helping us through this trial is not to get the immediate or instant gratification in the Christian life. It's for us to recognize the help he wants to give us is to be strong, is to be resilient, is to be firmly grounded in our faith.

And so you picture a disciplinarian, a father—I've already quoted Proverbs 13—that he's just going to get in there like a fitness coach or some hard-nosed football coach and just make you do it.

And the great thing about this is in verse number 16, it's tempered with something, and we love these words. And what's so great about it is the combination, a rare combination of somebody that wants to give us what we need, but also is going to give it.

Look at the two words in verse 16. He's going to give it wrapped in mercy and grace. Aren't those good words? Let us approach them the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

And you know what I'm talking about. These are two approaches to people that stand in tension. Because if I have a real sympathy and empathy for someone and I want to be merciful and gracious with them, I'm often tempted not to give them what they need. I'm rather quick to give in to what they want.

And yet, in juxtaposition to that, here is a God who says, no, no, no, I don't just want to give you what you want. I'd like to give you what you need, but really you need to know that I'm motivated in a way and with a heart that's full of grace and mercy.

And that doesn't mean that we have a God that meets us in the middle. It means we have a doctor with a great bedside manner. You—no, no, no. You've got to have all the surgery. But I'm going to administer it to you in the most gracious and merciful way possible.

God is a God who has that rare ability to bring help to us. As the Scripture says, we ought to bring to other people who speaks the truth, but he speaks the truth in love. Remember that text? So important for us to realize that.

He's not going to shy away from giving us what we need, which is the ability to stand in the face of temptation and to do what's right even when it doesn't feel good. But he's going to walk through that trial with us and say, I know exactly how you feel. And I want to administer to you the ability to stand firm in the help that you need and the strength and resilience you need. But I totally understand where you're coming from.

And you know, the indulgent parent over and against the doctor with the bad bedside manner, God is the perfect blending of both. God is going to give us what we need, but do it with wonderful grace and tremendous mercy.

Christ wants to do that for us in a way that is gracious.



And really where I'd like to camp for the majority of our time is in point number three. Should have given you more room for this, but jot this down.

Number three, the text is getting us to the place in verse 16 of saying, guys, you've got to approach the throne of grace with confidence.

Number three on your outline, we need to start asking for this help. God, I need to realize that you are a God that wants to walk me through this, which means, and it's certainly poetic in verse 16, that I need to be in the regular pattern of approaching this throne of grace, and I need to approach it with a great sense of confidence. And I know that when I do that, you're going to give me merciful and gracious help to stand resilient in holding firmly to the faith that I profess, and also resisting temptation in my life.

Start asking.

Realize this, that asking is hard. It's hard because it's in some ways humiliating to ask for help. And yet that's what stands oftentimes between failure and success.

Even if I can extract that one verse from James chapter 4 that sometimes, verse 2, we don't have because we don't ask. Now there's a lot to the rest of that text, but in the pangs and the throes of difficulty in the Christian life, sometimes the reason I waver and sometimes the reason I faint is because I'm not asking as God tells me to, and I need to learn to ask, but asking is humiliating.

It's difficult because I need to recognize that the Christian life is not something where I put a few principles to live by in the backpack of my life and then walk out to face this thing on my own.

God says, no, you need an approach to the Christian life that is fully reliant and dependent on Christ. Remember that great text in John 15? He says, I'm the vine, you're the branches. If you abide in me you'll bear much fruit, but if you don't abide in me, man, there's big problems. As a matter of fact, he summarizes it well in verse number five, I think it is, when he says, listen, without me you can do nothing. You will be an utter and total failure in the Christian life unless you abide in me. And you need to remain in me faithfully, intimately, and closely.

Which means the Christian life is a bit of a paradox to people who see other people in the Christian life who are abiding with the invisible Christ and they see such resilient strength in the face of opposition and in the face of temptation and think, well, what strong people.

And yet they're people like the apostle Paul who find what it is to be at the end of their own human strength and often just grasping with all that they have left to the strength of Christ. And they have an intimacy because they're constantly asking before the throne of grace for Christ's help and intimacy with Christ that we don't have.

And we think, wow, how strong they are. And yet Paul put it well when he said, you know what, God's strength is perfected in weakness. And it's often when we're to the place of utter brokenness and crying out to God that God gets us to the place of resilient strength. But we've got to ask.

And that's not the kind of Christianity a lot of us want. Because when the non-Christian says to us, oh, your Christianity, it's just a crutch. And we want to say, no, no, no, it's not a crutch.



And yet the Scripture is very clear. Without Christ, you can do nothing. And if you don't depend on him, you're an absolute and utter mess. And you're just failure waiting to happen. Of course it's a crutch for you. It's not a crutch. It's a gurney. It's a complete bed for you to lay on. And if you don't lay on that, you're just a mess.

Turn with me to 2 Kings chapter 5. I think this is an important point to unpack because in 2 Kings chapter 5, I think what we'll find is that sometimes in the Christian life, it's not just the asking that requires humility. It's the answer that requires a great deal of humility.

Because there are some in the Christian life that I meet that are often just trying to live the Christian life with a great sense of independence. They know nothing of that great statement in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 verse number 6 where the Bible says that God who comforts the downcast comforted us with the coming of Titus.

And I know people that desperately want the comfort of God. They just don't want Titus in their living room. You know what I'm saying? They don't see the fact that God's answers oftentimes require humility.

And it's counterintuitive because God is asking us sometimes, if we are going to be receiving this help, that the help doesn't come sitting on some rock or in some monastery somewhere. It comes when we humbly let down our guard or let down the walls of our life and say, okay, the answer sometimes is humiliating. It requires a great deal of humility.

And no one illustrates that better than Naaman in 2 Kings 5. Do you remember this text?

Naaman was the commander, this is verse number 1, of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him, interestingly enough, this foreign country, Yahweh had given victory to Aram. And he was a valiant soldier. Problem was he had a skin disease, which the Bible, Old Testament Hebrew, doesn't have a lot of different words for the skin disease. We're not sure exactly which skin disease it was, but his skin was in bad shape.

Now, bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress, if only my master could see the prophet who is in Samaria, he could cure him of his skin disease.

And Naaman went to his master, and he told him what the girl from Israel had said. By all means, go, the king of Aram replied, and I'll send a letter to the king of Israel.

So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. And the letter he took to the king of Israel read with this letter, he said, I'm sending to you my servant Naaman to you and that you may cure him of his leprosy.

And as soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and he said, am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he's trying to pick a quarrel with me?



When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message. Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.

So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, go and wash. He didn't come out. Check that out. Just sends a guy out. Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be cleansed.

But Naaman went away angry and he said, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of Yahweh his God and wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.

Arnot, Abana, and Farpar—that doesn't sound like a great river—and the rivers of Damascus, sorry, better than any of the waters of Israel. Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?

So he turned and he went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you have not done it? How much more then when he tells you wash and be cleansed? I mean, that's simple.

So he went down and he dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him. And his flesh was restored and he became clean like that of a young boy. Wow.

Here's a guy who finally had to learn that the answer for his problem that came from the prophet was much simpler, much more mundane, much more common than he expected.

And just like the apostle Paul, I'm sure that the great concept of a God who comforts the downcast, he thought perhaps, maybe like Naaman, that there was a sense that God would in some mysterious or miraculous way provide some kind of encouragement to his heart. And all he's wanting Paul to do is open his front door to Titus.

And you know, I find a lot of people seeking and searching for God's answers for their problems, and they're a whole lot simpler than you think they are. And they come in packages that we think, wow, I don't know, that's so simple. It's almost humiliating to walk down the path of God's answers. And I know it feels vulnerable.

Asking God for help is going to require humility. Sometimes the answers require that as well. And we've got to get to the place of saying, God, I need to be the kind of humble servant that says to you, I not only want your help, but I want your help in the packages that you ordain, which sometimes are the kinds of packages that I look around and say, well, I never thought I'd be into that.

And stop with the independence before God and let us humble our hearts and say, God, we not only want to ask in humility, we want to receive in humility.

Asking, by the way, back in Hebrews chapter 4, verse number 16, there's a word connected with this in verse 16 that's important for us to catch. The kind of asking, though it doesn't say—asking



itself is an act of humility and sometimes the answers require it—there is a certain attitude of the heart that we're to have when we approach God, which stands in an antithesis, by the way, to the try God bumper sticker approach.

We don't come to God saying, well, I'll give this a shot. I'm struggling. What would God have me do? We'll check it out. It's what I often call the blank check approach. We come to God with full assurance that not only is he the God who can answer me, but he is the God who will answer me.

Take a look at that word. It says we're to approach the throne of grace with confidence, with boldness. I come to God with a sense that I know that God is a God who could calm the storm if he wanted to, but he's also a God that may want to change my heart and change my attitude toward the storm that I face. And he may want me to walk through that for a little bit more, you know, maybe a few more days, a few more weeks, a few more months, maybe for the rest of my life, as Paul learned with the whole thorn in the flesh thing.

Important for us to realize, though, that when I come to God, I'm not coming with anything back. I'm not saying, God, I'm holding back, or I'll do this or that, but I'm not going to do this. The answers, I come with full release and full assurance that God is going to give me the answer.

It's a James chapter 1, asking without any doubting, because the one who doubts, man, he's like the sea, like the wind being tossed around. Man, don't do that. The Scripture says that we need to be asking with a sense of confidence.

So I went through this passage this week. I thought this is such a simple concept for us, but it's something that we don't often do. And I want to do something today, and I left some time for this, and I hope that this won't be new to you Thursday nighters, but I want to spend a little time in prayer together.

We were convicted the other Thursday that God had called us to gather together. Remember, Jesus said that the church ought to be, the temple—at least in the Old Testament, that picture he had—was not to be a place of commerce. It wasn't to be a Costco. It was to be a place of prayer, a house of prayer. Remember he said that?

I want to spend a little time, and we have some time for it today, coming to God and for the help that we need. And I want to recognize that even in the knowledge of Scripture that you have, God may already have the answers for you that are clear, but we need to be humble enough to not only ask him, but to receive his answer.

And if you're struggling, let's just be honest with God about that.

The way we did this on Thursday night a couple weeks ago is I gave you a few topics, and then I allowed you in silence—not out loud, not muttering, not groaning, not barking—just sitting there quietly talking to God, giving you a chance to dialogue with God about the things that we've just taught.

So I want to give some time asking. I'm saying here, start asking. We need to do it. So here's a little lab work for us, okay?



So here's what I'd like you to do. Get comfortable in your seat. We're going to pray. I'm going to give you a couple verbal cues. And then in silence, we're going to spend a little time praying together, okay?

Let's pray. I'll start. I'll pray. I'll give you a topic and let you pray. No one's praying verbally. You're praying in your heart quietly to God.

Let's pray.

God, I know that all of us are subject to the difficulties of trying to go against the flow of this world. It's into expedience. It's into doing whatever feels good. It's into compromise. And we've been called to live on a different level, a different standard.

And Lord, I know that that's a difficulty just because of our environment, but add to that the weakness of our flesh and our humanity, and an enemy that's there roaring, looking for someone to devour us, is a tough, difficult assignment. It's an assignment that you wanted to bring us to the end of our own confidence in right away, and so you would bring us to the answer, which is to trust firmly in Christ who promised us in Matthew 28, he'd never leave us and never forsake us.

So God, right now, as we spend some time asking for your help, I pray that these here today would take in their minds the real issues of their Christian life and the difficulties that they face and the temptations to compromise. And in their heart, even sometimes the temptation just to give up and walk away from whatever challenge that you put them in. I pray, God, that they would lay just this challenge before you in their heart.

So right now, God, we want to spend some time asking for your help. And the first thing, God, I want to guide this congregation into praying for right now is just the humility to be fully reliant upon you.

So I pray, God, that we confess right now any independence that we've had, any unwillingness to pray, any unwillingness to subject ourselves to your answers, that we would spend some time just saying, God, I need to be dependent on you, and like the branch, I want to be relying on and abiding in and being dependent upon the vine.

So God, as we give a moment of silence here for people to do that, I pray hearts would connect with you right now.

God, forgive us for trying to live this Christian life without a prayerful dependence upon you. God, please help us to ask you, to reach our hand out to you more often day by day, hour by hour. God, forgive us for prayerlessness. And God, make us people that cling to you in our own hearts for strength and for help to fight this battle, this good fight, as the apostle Paul put it.

Okay, gang, I'd like us to talk to God right now about a specific temptation that you face, okay? Quietly, before God, not out loud. Talk to God about the temptation that you face right now at this stage of your Christian life. Talk to him about that. Ask for his help.

Confess to God the failures of the past. He just wants agreement without excuses. Confess your sin to God.



If God has already brought to your attention the importance of letting other people in on this problem, tell God right now that you're committed to getting the human help that you need. Tell him that.

Temptation to sin is one topic in this text. Another is wanting to give up. Talk to God about an area of your Christian life that you're tempted to give up on. Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's a spiritual discipline. Maybe it's a ministry that you know God has called you to. Talk to God about your temptation there. Ask him for help.

Talk to God about your resolve to never give up on following Christ and doing what is right. With a dependent heart, tell him you're willing to walk this walk of faith all the way to the end. Talk to him about that.

Clearly, one of the reasons this text is here is to give Christians hope. If you tend to see the glass half empty, talk to God right now and ask him to infuse your heart with hope about your Christian life. Hope about your marriage. Hope about your future. Talk to God about hope and ask him to infuse your heart with hope.

God, we thank you for this sacred time of speaking with you in our hearts. We thank you for the promise of this text that you are sympathetic toward our weakness.

We thank you, Jesus, specifically, for wanting to help us in an empathetic way because you know the pain of betrayal, you know the pain of doing the right thing and suffering for it. You know the pain of sitting in the garden and praying that the cup of difficulty would pass from you, and yet you knew that you were resigned to the will of God, that your Father would have you walk through that tough path.

Jesus, thanks for feeling our pain, which is minor compared to yours, and being willing to graciously and mercifully help us through our trials.

God, we thank you for being a God who cares, who cares so much about us that you say that even the hairs on our head are numbered. Certainly all of our problems are numbered and organized in your mind.

And we thank you, God, that as we express our hearts to you in asking for your divine help, that we would be humble enough to respond to your answers. When your answers involve accountability or confession, when your answers involve opening up our lives to other Christians or lowering our defenses in our lives, God, we pray that we would be open to the help that your Spirit wants to apply to us. We wouldn't fight you.

And God, we pray for those that are on the edge right now who are really suffering in some new and dark and painful ways. We pray, God, that the body of Christ would be sensitive enough to those that are around us to reach out and be a Titus to a Paul, to be a source of divine comfort to those that are hurting.

And God, I pray that all of us, from the one that's hurting the deepest this afternoon and those that are on the top of the mountain right now in their spiritual life, that you would give us all a sense of your hope, that you want us to walk all the way through the Christian life with a sense of resolve,



that we're not going to deny our faith, that we are not going to walk away from the truth, that we are not going to allow our lives by your Spirit's help to careen into sin and compromise.

And God, if we're in a season of sin and failure, bring us back. May this time of prayer be a turning point for our lives.

God, we thank you so much that you've offered to help, that you're willing to help, and that as we asked, you promised to respond with help, the best help.

God, we love you very much. Thanks for this good time to connect with you this afternoon.

In Jesus' name, amen.