

Holding Fast Our Profession

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Hebrews 4:14

Young people today, more than ever before, are being tempted to leave what they profess. Quite often it is in the way of marrying someone from another denomination. The passion of love blinds one to the reality of the sin and danger of leaving the church in which the truth is preached and taught. In hard economic times a job in another part of the country is offered to us. We are tempted and so inclined to accept this offer. After all, jobs are hard to come by. One has to make a living and support a family. The things of the world appear to outweigh the things of the kingdom of heaven.

The writer to the Hebrew was aware of these temptations. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he gives us exhortations based on the truths of Holy Scripture. He says, "Let us hold fast our profession."

It is good to be reminded just what that profession is. In the fellowship of the saints it is given you to know of the marvelous works of God, of the glory of his grace in the beloved, and the blessedness of salvation. This is redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and covenant fellowship with the triune God. It consists of what through the word, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the church has revealed to you things that eye has not seen, neither the ear heard, nor has ever arisen in the heart of man. In the fellowship with the church in the world you embrace that truth by a true and living faith. It is the truth that controls and dominates your whole existence and very life in the midst of the world.

We look to the glorious truth that we have a great High Priest who sacrificed himself for your and my sins and obtained for us forgiveness of sins and righteousness. As High Priest he is also our advocate who intercedes with the Father for us. He knows and is acquainted by deepest experience with all our infirmities, sins, and weaknesses, trials, and temptations. He constantly prays for us with a prayer that is never denied. Indeed, he is great. All the Old Testament priests could only point to him, for they were but shadows. Christ is the reality who brought not the blood of animals, which could never atone for our sins; but he brought himself, the perfect sacrifice.

He is Jesus, the Son of God, the revelation of the God of our salvation. We had made ourselves incapable of doing any good and were inclined to all evil. God came in the person of his Son and joined himself so perfectly to our nature in the womb of the virgin that he assumed that nature in its entirety, though without sin. He came to do God's will, to fulfill the law that we had transgressed and could not keep. Burned by the wrath of God, he satisfied the justice of God completely. What a Savior! Indeed, a great High Priest!

Having erased our debt and guilt completely He arose from the dead and ascended into heaven and came to sit at the right hand of God the Father. To this profession we hold fast.

Our holding fast means to take hold of and hold fast, never to let go. One cleaves with a firm faith, a lively hope, and an ardent love. It is to love the word of the gospel, and to cling to our High Priest with all the power of faith and child-like trust. That implies that you are zealous concerning the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, revealed in the Scriptures. You strive for the purity of the faith once delivered to the saints. Standing firm, you refuse to be tossed about by any wind of doctrine. It further implies that you appropriate this pure revelation of the living Lord by a true and living faith. You cling to it so that your mind is constantly enlightened by it as a certain knowledge, and so that your will is wholly controlled and determined by it, clinging to Christ in complete confidence. Living such a life, you will let your light shine, never hiding it under a

bushel. Forsaking your old nature and walking in the new, you reveal yourself as being of the party of God, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This must be taken seriously, for it is a matter of life and death. You must be prepared fully, without wavering or compromise, to accept the word of the Lord: he who will save his life shall lose it, and he who will lose his life for my sake will save it unto life eternal. The world calls you to be tolerant of its ungodly ways and beliefs. They, of course, are most intolerant of any of your Christian beliefs. Do not be deceived by their pious talk, for that is all that it is. They have no intention of tolerating what you believe.

You must reject the other lordship in this world. It is of the man of sin, of the son of perdition, of the beast and of the false prophet. It too strives for your all and is wholly intolerant. It stands radically opposed to your profession and will not rest until all the world worships him. He will seduce you by false philosophy, even under the cloak of righteousness. He will tempt you to become unfaithful to your profession by offering you privileges of the kingdom of this world. He will threaten you with his furious wrath, cast you out so that you can neither buy nor sell, and put the sword power to your throat.

Your and my calling is to hold fast, looking unto Jesus, our ascended High Priest. Without that look of faith, that constant look upon him, you will be swallowed up by the waves of temptation and tribulation. But seeing him, you will be safe, without fear of wavering.

The encouragement that we are given here is that we have a High Priest who is favorably disposed to us (v. 15). Here we see that we do not have a high priest who is not able to be affected with respect to our infirmities, but he was tried according to all things in like manner as we are, though without sin. He knows exactly what we go through when our faith is tried, when we are surrounded with manifold temptations. He, the strong and sinless one, was tempted in all points as we are, but did not succumb. He knows that we are weak and sinful. He knows that we would not be able to stand for a moment without his sustaining and redeeming grace. Such a

sympathetic High Priest we need. We still dwell in the body of sin and death that never delights to do the will of God, is still inclined to all evil, and still constitutes our greatest enemy. We constantly need this High Priest who sits at the right hand of God to pray for us to the Father.

We are called to come boldly to the throne of grace (v. 16). The Father's grace is his attitude of favor that shines upon us through the face of Jesus Christ.

What you, as young people, and all of God's children, must do is come to this throne of grace. We must acknowledge our own emptiness, our sin and death, and our need for grace and mercy. We must have a spiritual apprehension of his fullness as it is revealed in all its beauty in the face of Jesus Christ. There must be a deep longing for his fellowship. With the confidence of faith we must appropriate all the spiritual blessings revealed unto us and promised to us by the symbol of that throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace.

Mercy is God's will to bless, for God is filled with a holy, eternal longing to lead his children into the glory of his everlasting tabernacle. Grace is the power by which all this is accomplished, the marvelous power by which He redeems us.

This we can do boldly, for our reception is assured. Christ is ascended as our High Priest who knows all our needs and fills them. This he does only as our ascended Lord. Hold fast to that profession!