

Hold On, Help is On the Way - Part 1

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[0 : 00] Merry Christmas to you all, especially if you can't be with us tomorrow, so this is an early Merry Christmas. Advent ends today, tomorrow.

The Christ Mass, the birth of our Lord Jesus, celebrated at that time that we've chosen, amen. But for us who believe, every day truly, truly is Christmas.

Amen? But thank God we live in a world where we can point on a day that the whole world know we believe.

We believe because it's true. The God man has come. Let's pray. Father, as we come to your word now, oh, we pray that our music and our singing, our praying has been pleasing in your sight.

For it was for you that we sing. It's to encourage each other, but it is for you that we sing. For Jesus, who is the heartbeat of our joy, the center of it, the reason for it.

[1 : 13] Oh, we thank you for this time of year. We celebrate him in just a, some, and maybe in some way, maybe even a deeper way. We celebrate him. We celebrate him. But we do it with great joy.

Even though at times our hearts may be broken at this time, we celebrate him who is the reason for joy, for gladness, for hope in this life and the life to come. May Jesus be exalted.

May Jesus be exalted. May Jesus be exalted. May Jesus be exalted. May Jesus be exalted. And may we hear his voice as your word is preached. May we hear the voice of the good shepherd, the voice of the son of God speaking to us, guiding us, leading us, giving us hope, giving us help, giving us strength, rebuking us, leading us out of our sins and into his righteousness.

Oh, may we hear the voice of the good shepherd. And Father, we would be remiss if we did not lift up to you. Once again, our dear sister, Sarah Drexler. Lord, as she has for the last couple days, in some sense, been fighting for her life.

Thank you that there's improvement. But Lord, we pray for more. We pray for her complete healing. We pray that you return her to her husband and family in good order. We pray, oh Lord, that you would be with her, that she would know your presence.

[2 : 31] Oh, Lord, that she would know just in her soul that she's not alone. And be with Brother Jim, Lord. Strengthen him as he has been by her side and anxious in many ways.

I know, Lord. Blessing. Give him faith and confidence in you. And again, we look forward to hearing a good report. We trust in you for her.

And Father, we do personally, I lift up my home church, 10th Presbyterian in Philly, as they are going through a horrible time. Oh, Lord, will you heal that church?

Heal that church. Send them a new pastor. Heal that church, a new shepherd. But Lord, may they bind together in love and grace. Even as you have blessed us, may you bless them.

Thank you for your mercy. May your word go forth. May you use your unworldly servant now to preach Christ and him alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 31] We're looking again, once again, back in this great passage of Hebrews chapter 2. And there will be another part to this. So, but we're looking at verses 16 through 18.

We're beginning to look at them today. Let me back up to verse 14 just to remind you. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death was subject to lifelong savory.

Here's our text. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, incarnation, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Amen.

That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Thank you. And once again, thank you, brothers and sisters, for leading us in song. Thank you so much. Thank you.

[5 : 23] Thank you. Okay. There's some truth to this. At least in my life. I can't speak for all my brothers. But I got to tell you, I believe I can figure it out.

I really do. I'm driving. My GPS Siri is acting like a fool. She's not talking right. And I'm driving in circles. But I believe. See, I have faith in Siri.

Between the two of us, we can figure out. I don't have to ask for directions. I hate asking for directions. I do. Because I don't ask you for help anyway.

My wife loves asking random strangers to take pictures of us. This beautiful, intelligent, godly woman wants me to give my iPhone to a stranger to take pictures of us.

My iPhone 15, baby, with titanium and all that kind of stuff. And I'm like, I'm not going to ask them. Nope. And she goes up.

[6 : 36] Will you take her? And they always say yes. No one ever refuses her. And they take great. And they get into it. People be, okay. They turn it left, right.

They be taking. I'm like, good grief, woman. Just take the picture. Man, just take the picture. But they get into it. I don't understand it. But it's true.

And in general, people, including women, don't like asking for directions. Don't like asking for help. Help. I looked this up.

Psychology Today ran an article about this very thing. Three reasons why it's so hard to ask for help. Couldn't believe it. I looked it up and there it was. One, we don't want to be a burden.

We're seeking a favor and not sure if the person or persons will appreciate our request. That's one. Number two, we don't want to be seen as vulnerable.

[7 : 36] People see this as weak when you ask for help. Number three, the article said, we make assumptions. People might not want to help you. They might not be able to help you.

Or they may be too busy to help you. Or they might not know how to help you. We assume one of those things. I messed up because I assume all of that.

And you know something? All of those reasons apply to God as well. We apply it to God. We don't know God and we assume he really, he's really not interested in helping us.

Why would he want to help me? I keep screwing up. And no, we don't want to be seen as needy people.

We want to earn our points with God, not receive them as mercy and grace. We want God to think we're all grown up.

- [8 : 41] Isn't it crazy? But you think I'm lying. Around this room, some of you are going, yep. Because you've done it. You felt it in your own heart. But what about Christmas?
- What about Christmas? You see, to truly celebrate Christmas, you have to admit that you need help. And not just any help.
- Christmas is an admission that we need divine help. We need God's help. So I stopped by on my way to heaven to tell you.
- Hold on. Help is on the way. Last time we saw that at Christmas, the Son of God is made like, this is our series, Made Like Us.
- The Son of God is made like us in the incarnation as Jesus so that he might want, remember last time, he might defeat death and Satan. The baby in the manger has come to defeat death and Satan and to set us free from the fear of death.
- [9 : 50] He had to be made like us to do that. You could say that Christmas is death-defying. But there are other reasons he had to be made like us. And that's this morning we're going to pick up in verse 16.
- The Son of God was made like us, an obvious one, but you'll see, to help us. The Son of God is made like us to help us.
- You're getting, of course, that's right. But let's dive in a little deeper for a minute. Verse 16. Twice the word helps is used in verse 16.
- The word, though, is very strange. It means to seize. It means to take hold of. To help us, he had to seize us.
- He had to grab us. And becoming like one of us, becoming like us, he takes hold of us to rescue us. Let's take a fireman.
- [10 : 49] Do you have, you, I don't know if any of you have been, ever have been rescued by firemen. I hope you haven't. But if you have, you know what I mean. I've seen it on TV. But when firemen go into a blaze, they go and they tend to sometimes find people who are being overcome by smoke, right?
- And these people are having trouble breathing. They're coughing. They're confused. They're dazed. They're blinded by the smoke.
- So, they're unable to find their way out of the fire. You would think with all that light, you know, the fire brings light. But no, in the fire, the smoke blinds you.
- Come on, where my firemen at? Is that right, Elder Gilbert? Okay, just checking. So, the firemen have to grab you by the hand and arms and sometimes carry you out, drag you out.
- Otherwise, you would perish for sure. Remember, the Lord Jesus does this for sinners, not angels. He does this for human beings, not angels.
- [11 : 58] Those angels that rebelled against Satan are doomed to destruction. But he comes into the fire to help you.
- He comes into the heat and the blindness, the darkness, the place where you can't breathe.
- He comes in there for you. But you have to ask the question, why does he mention angels? I mean, okay, I get it.
- You don't help angels. But why does the writer of Hebrews think it's important to mention angels? I mean, I wouldn't have written it that way. Well, something interesting here.
- He speaks of angels because he's likely dealing with a belief that put too much emphasis and credit on angels and their role in salvation. Even back then, even back then, people tended to worship anything but the risen Savior.

[13 : 09] Put their hope more in creatures than the Creator. Even back then. Much like Jehovah's Witnesses today teach that Jesus is a mighty God and not the almighty God.

And listen, that he was the archangel Michael before his incarnation. I remember having debates with the guy about this. Even back then, there was this—back in biblical times, there was this confusion about angels.

That's why he begins the letter the way he does. He begins the letter in chapter 1 by comparing the Son of God to angels. Listen to what he says real quick. Just a few points.

Verse 5, for which—to which of the angels did God ever say? Did he ever say—I mean, he's being sarcastic. Did he ever say, you are my son, today I've begotten you?

Or again, I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son? And again, when he brings the firstborn, that's Jesus, into the world, he says, let all God's angels worship him.

[14 : 14] Verse 13, to which of the angels has he ever said? Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The point he's making is that Jesus is greater than angels.

He's never talked about angels in these ways. When I showed this to that Jehovah, this man I was talking to, I even did it from his own translation of the Bible.

So the conversation ended, and he was blown away. I never saw him again. He wanted to go ask some questions of his people. I pray the Lord opened his eyes to who Jesus is.

He is not the archangel Michael ever. He is the creator of angels. He is the one who sits at the right hand of the Son of God. If you don't know who Jesus is, if you get this wrong, you lose everything.

Who is Jesus? The Son of God made flesh. The God-man come among us. The creator taking up our humanity to set us free.

[15 : 18] If he's not, listen, the greatest miracle is the incarnation. Resurrection is second. But the incarnation, Jesus becoming like us, is the heart and soul of our biblical theology.

It's the heart and soul of our salvation. Listen, because if Jesus is not God made flesh, everything we know about Jesus is wrong. Nothing.

You get nothing if he's not God in human flesh. We get nothing. We have a dead man who was just unlucky. But if he is God in human flesh, he's your help.

He's the help you've been looking for. He's the help you need right now more than anything else in life. And notice who he helps.

The offspring. The seed of Abraham. Now, if you're sitting there, I know you're probably thinking, I'm not Jewish. Neither am I, by the way.

[16 : 34] Not by natural birth and descent. No, we're not Jewish. Most of us in this room are not Jewish. But that's not what he's talking about. You see, throughout the passage, if you follow the context, verse 10, the Bible says he's bringing many sons to glory.

Verse 12, if you have your Bibles, I hope you have your Bibles somewhere around. Verse 12, Jesus calls the people he's coming to rescue to help his brothers. And verse 13, he talks about the children God has given him.

In verse 14, Jesus shares his blood and flesh to identify with the children. And of course, even in verse 17, makes clear that Jesus had to be made like his brothers.

This is much more than the Jewish people. The seed of Abraham family are all those who believe in Jesus throughout history. All those in the Old Testament who look forward to the Messiah, who will put in their hope in the coming Messiah.

And all those since the coming of Jesus, Jew and Gentile, who look to Jesus as the Savior, as the Messiah, as the help. The great help for humanity.

[17 : 43] Speaking to non-Jews who believe in Jesus as their Savior, Paul writes, Galatians 3, 20, 29. And if you are Christ, that is, if you have put your faith in Jesus, he's grabbed hold of you.

That's why you're his, because he came to seize you, to grab hold of you, to give you the help you need. If you are Christ, watch this, then you are Abraham's offspring.

Heirs according to the promise. So maybe there's a little bit of Jewishness in this after all. You are Abraham's children, his spiritual children, through faith in Jesus.

This means the patriarchs, the heroes of the Old Covenant, and the covenants of the Old Testament all belong to you. You who believe in Jesus, when you read the Old Testament, you're reading about your family.

You read about your ancestors. You read about those who hoped in your Messiah. They were waiting for him. They were hoping for him. Abraham knew his seed would come one day.

[18 : 48] David knew that there would be a great king would rise up and settle his throne forever. Isaiah knew that a son of man, one would come who would die for the people.

They knew. And those are your folk, y'all. The promises made to them belong to you in many ways. But they're fulfilled in Jesus.

They have come to fruition in Jesus. You are part of the family of the Old Covenant saints. Abraham is yours.

That's why we baptize our children, giving them the sign of the covenant. Because our father Abraham taught us this with circumcision. He taught us to mark the children, the boys in his day.

But we, by the grace of God, because Jesus changed the sign from circumcision to baptism. That's, we are in line with the Old Covenant as we do this.

[19 : 52] Because the Old Covenant belongs to us. It's fulfilled in the new. It's fulfilled in Jesus. The only way Jesus could lay hold of us to rescue us is to be made like us in every respect except sin.

And that's important. He took up the covenant that Abraham was hoping in, which was broken, by the way.

He took up the law of God, which all humanity had broken, including you and I. And he fulfilled it. He lived it perfectly. He did all of these things in our humanity for us, in our place.

He is the righteous one. The only righteous one. He is the only good one. Truly good in every respect. And we are the children of Abraham, keepers of the law and covenant, only as we trust in Jesus as our righteousness.

You know, righteousness means conformity to the law. Righteousness means law keeping. When you break the law, you are unrighteous. If you got a ticket coming here to church because you were speeding, you were unrighteous.

[21 : 17] But if you kept the law and drove the speed limit, or thereabouts, you are righteous in that regard. The problem is we've all broken God's law.

Whether we've broken man's law or not, humanity's law or not, we've all broken God's law. And we need someone, someone who will go into the courtroom of heaven and fight for us.

Hallelujah. We have a great lawyer. Jesus is that great lawyer. And he does even more than that. In righteousness, he gives us his record.

My record is horrible. I mean, good grief. If I were to go into the courtroom of heaven and try to plead my case, well, you know, Lord, I pastored for over 30 years, pastoral staff, five churches, three a senior pastor.

My wife and I, we planted churches. We did all these good things. We helped people. We tried to, you know, Lord, I'm okay. He would say, no, you're not.

[22 : 22] Because I know your mind. I know it's all, really all in your heart sometimes. And you messed up, Kev. Wrong answer.

I got to go in the court and say, and throw myself on the mercy of the court. Come on, somebody. You've been there. You got to throw yourself on the mercy of the court and say, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I messed up. But I have a divine lawyer who then steps up to the bar. Come on, somebody. Can you see it? I can see my lawyer now.

Your Honor, sidebar, sidebar. He steps up to the court, talks to the judge and says, he's mine. Take my record. Put it on his account.

Look at him as you look at me, Your Honor. Come on, somebody. And the judge says, okay. He goes for it. And then he does even more. He says, punish me for his stuff.

[23 : 25] I'll take it. Whatever he owes, I pay. You know any lawyer who'll do that for you? That's righteousness. That's what happens in the courtroom of heaven.

He, the son, takes, he helps the children. He helps the children of Abraham more. They are also the children of God.

We are the ones that he helps. We are the ones that he has chosen. Not angels. They're doomed. If they fell, they're doomed. Don't pray for angels. Don't pray for Satan. Don't waste your time.

But the people, humanity, pray for people. That they will respond to the help that Christmas brings. The help that Jesus shows us.

He comes to grab hold of us. He comes to give us his righteousness. He comes to make us his people and his children so that he can help us.

[24 : 26] He lays hold of us. And John says this in John chapter 10. We saw this some time ago. We're safe in his grasp because John says this. Jesus said, I give them eternal life.

They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand. I and the father are one.

Do you understand? When he comes to help you, he grabs hold of you. And then he says, no one can take you from me. Why does he have to say that to us?

Because the enemy will try. And let's be honest. We ourselves will doubt. We ourselves, you know those moments when you've messed up again?

Those moments when you promised God you'd never do that again. And you did. And you feel like he has to, he can't, how can, you know what I'm saying?

[25 : 31] You don't even want to ask for help anymore. Because you wreck, because you feel so low and so ashamed of yourself. You need to know what Jesus says. He came into our humanity to seize us, to grab us, to take us.

And then he says, and no one can take you from me. I got you. I got you. In the midst of the darkness. In the midst of bad news from the doctor. In the midst of bad news from your lawyer.

In the midst of bad news about your kids. In the midst of bad news about your job. He says, I got you. I became like you.

To seize you. To make you mine. And anything that touches you has to go through me. And if it goes through me and it hurts, listen, I'm with you.

Hebrews says, the son learned obedience through the things which he suffered. That's a deep statement all by itself. I can't imagine, I don't even, I can't have a hard time getting, that's talking about his humanity, I think.

[26 : 48] Because the deity doesn't, no. No, he didn't need that. But as a human being, he identifies with us. And his suffering was a way of growing and maturing.

He trusted God as a human being in our place and for us. So you're suffering. He's got you.

It's instructive. You understand your pain is instructive. It's meant to remind you. Hmm?

Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Hmm? Now, I don't mean like when you're crossing the street with your kid. You know, you got a little three-year-old, four-year-old.

You know how kids are. They're in the middle of the street. The ADD kicks in. And they want to look at all the cars. And you're trying to cross this broad. You're crossing Broad Street here.

[27 : 45] And in the middle of the street, children go, ooh, look at that. Ooh. And you have to have them. You know, you have to, you know, you hold my hand, right? Hold my hand.

But here's the truth. They may be holding your hand, but you are holding theirs. You're not trusting them to keep their grip. Come on, somebody.

We're not trusting the children to keep their grip. ADD kicks in. And we all got it. Come on, let's be real. Too much sugar in that diet. You know, that white powder will kill you.

See, you have a white powder. I'm telling you, stay away from sugar. And, you know, we all get distracted by life. We're like Peter walking on the water. Ooh. Oh, look at that. He's walking on the water with Jesus.

Oh, what, what, what? Ooh. Waves, waves, waves. We're that dark. Oh, shark. I mean, I don't know. We get distracted. And when we get distracted, we go the wrong direction.

[28 : 42] That's why he is holding on to us. Like a good parent, he's holding on to us.

Man, I didn't mean to say all this. I got to move on. Yeah, y'all did this. I don't know. Something, something, something, somebody need to hear that. I don't know. Paul Tripp reminds us when we're thinking about this in God, when we're thinking about this idea of his grip upon us and our need of help or our lack of belief we need help.

Paul Tripp says this. Christmas story confronts our delusions that we can live healthy and wholesome, independent lives. If we were capable of being what we're supposed to be and doing what we're designed to do, if we were able to solve our deepest and most foundational problems, there would have been no need whatsoever for Jesus, the Son of God, that is, to take on human form, to be born a baby, to live, to die, and to rise again.

The Christmas story confronts us with our dependency. The Christmas story tells us that we need help.

Are you celebrating Christmas for real? I just got to, thank you, babe. I believe it. Somebody is listening.

[30 : 12] The children will lead us. But are you celebrating Christmas for real? Christmas is a cry that I need help.

Christmas is a cry for the Lord, help me to be more dependent on you. See, if that's not how you're celebrating Christmas, then with a biblical understanding of Christmas, you're not really celebrating Christmas.

You're celebrating America's Christmas, you know, buying some gifts, going in debt, buying gifts for people you don't even like. You're paying that bill off for the next six months.

For what? If you haven't cried out, Lord, I need you. I need your help.

And not just today. Christmas is a cry that says, I need your help now and long as I breathe. Christmas is not one day a year.

[31 : 33] It's not, you know, we just, on Christmas, I need help, Lord. January 1st, back to normal. That's not, no. Jesus came.

Andrew, he came to help you be a dad. Woo! He came, he came, Broderick, he came to help you be a man of God.

Amen. Phil, he came to help you stand up and be a man of God, of faith and character. He did it. He came to help us.

He came to help Kevin Smith and get me and bring me up out of West Philly, keep me off of drugs and all kinds of other things that were happening. Some of you, he saved, he came to keep you alive.

Because if you had kept going to where you were going, you wouldn't be here. He came to deliver us, to help us.

[32 : 33] He's never lost a case. He doesn't lose those he helps. If Jesus is helping you, you are helped.

And you will continue to be helped. He will never turn his back on helping you. He will never stop helping you. If you are trusting in him as the one who can save you from your sins, as the one who can save you from destroying yourself, he will never stop.

He will never stop. Where are you turning for help today?

We all need it. We all need help. At some point in our lives, we all need help. Sorry, at multiple points in our lives, we all need help.

Probably every week, you need help somewhere. Come on, let's be honest. But where is your ultimate help? Where are you looking for help for identity?

[33 : 39] Where are you looking for help when it comes to the fact that you will close your eyes one day, and they will not open in this world? Where are you looking for help for meaning and purpose?

We're all looking for help. If you're not looking to Jesus, can I just tell you right now, you're looking for something in creation to help you.

And everything in creation dies, crumbles, breaks, falls apart.

Everything created, even the sun is winding down. According to what I've read from the physicists and whatnot. I mean, come on, really?

Everything is subject to decay. If you're looking to creation to give you help, you're looking to that which is finite and fallible and decaying in some way.

[34 : 43] Even your best friends and family, they can help to some extent. But only God can give you the meaning and purpose and life that he created you to have.

He promised Adam and Eve he would send help. And he did. Jesus is to help. Whether you'll be in grief or in joy, Jesus is to help.

Whether you are in doubt or in fear or in perfect happiness, Jesus is still your help. Will you celebrate Christmas?

Will you truly celebrate Christmas? By crying out to Jesus for help. Trusting Jesus for help. Worshiping Jesus as the God-man greater than angels.

As the God-man, the creator and sustainer in all things. Will you worship him and cry out to him for help? Nobody can help you like Jesus.

[36 : 01] Because no one can help you like God. Amen. Okay, I'm going to get corny. Some of you have heard this before, so pretend you haven't.

Sometimes we're like the man who was mountain climbing. Dr. Bush always loves telling this story. You'll just do the guys mountain climbing. He's up, I don't know, 2,000 feet.

Having a good old time, hanging from the rocks. He got rocks in his head. What are you going? And he slips and falls. Grabs on as he was sliding down the mountain to a certain death.

He grabs on to this branch. Okay? He grabs on to the branch. His fall is delayed. His fall is arrested. He's hanging there 1,500 feet now above the ground.

And he's looking down. He's never been a religious man. Never been religious at all. I mean, he celebrated Christmas, but it was just buying gifts and having parties and good times. But now is a good time to find out if God is real.

[37 : 13] So he's hanging 15 feet above the earth, and he cries out, Is there anybody up there who can help me? He cries out for a good 10 minutes.

Got nothing else to do. He can't pull up, and he don't want to let go. He's holding on. Come on. And here's a voice from heaven.

The voice says, Yes, I am here. I can help you. Great! What do I have to do? And the voice says, Let go of the branch.

Trust me. Trust me. Let go of the branch. I got you. He's 1,500 feet above the earth. He looks down.

He thinks about it. He has one more question. Is anybody else up there who can help me? I know, I know.

[38 : 16] I've heard it before. But that works for me. Because sometimes we don't want the help that God has given us. Christian?

Christian? Hello? Sometimes we want to find out if there's some. Is there? Can you? That's not what I was asking for.

You see, when you trust Jesus for Christmas help, I'm going to call it that. When you trust him for that help, it is trusting that his way of helping you is also the best way.

And it may not be what you would have preferred or chosen. And you know why? Because you're not God. If you're not God. If you're not God. If you're not God. If you knew what God knew, you would say thank you.

Because that's the way. That's the way. You're not God. I'm going to pray. You're not God. You're not God. I'm going to pray. You're not God. You're not God. You're not God. You're not God. You're not God.

[39 : 15] You're not God. You're not God. You're not God. You're not God. He's here. He's here to help you. Merry Christmas. Father, will you help us as we meditate on just this portion of this passage? Thank you that you came to help humans and not angels. Thank you that we don't have to be like angels. Thank you that we don't have to be strong and powerful like angels.

We're just people. We're just, we're just, your word says we're just dust, and you know we're just dust. We're weak and fallible and fickle and scared and selfish. It's us. It's us, Lord.

But thank you that you came to help us with all of that. Thank you for Jesus who took up our humanity that he might seize us and drag us out of the fire and drag us out of death into life itself.

May we find help in him this Christmas season. Help us. And Lord, may we walk in his help for the rest of our lives, day by day, trusting him to help us. Help us, Lord, to grab hold of this, even as you have grabbed hold of us. In Jesus' name.