

# CHRIST, OUR SYMPATHIZER AND SAVIOR - 2

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## II. THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:15**, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **one who in every respect has been tempted as we are**, yet without sin.
- ▶ **The Message**, “We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin.”
  - **Similarity** [Tempted as we are] and **Distinction** [Without sin]

**How could Jesus sympathize with us when he did not fully share in our sinful nature?**

- 1) “One who in every respect has been tempted as we are” does not mean He faced every type temptation as we are. Even all humans don’t face all types of temptations [Ex. Homosexuality, Theft, Adultery].

**The point of the author:** Just as Christ was human in every possible sense [Christ shared humanity in every aspect], He faced temptation as a human in every possible sense. This text does not speak about all types of temptation but the reality of temptation as a human.

- 2) The essence of temptation is to disobey the will of the Father. Every temptation is an enticement to disobey God. The focus is not about Christ facing every type of temptation but that He faced the temptation to disobey God. He faced that temptation and facing temptation is not a sin, but He was without sin. **Hebrews 5:8** says, “He learned obedience through what he suffered.” **Philippians 2:8** says that Christ was obedient to the point of death.
- 3) You know the power of temptation when you fight against it, not when you yield to it. Christ’s temptation was greater because He didn’t yield to temptation.
- 4) The absence of inherent sinful nature does not diminish the full force of external temptation. We don’t understand that because we are inherently sinful. Adam and Eve are examples of how powerful external temptation could be, and they fell into sin but Christ was without sin.
- 5) Even as children of God not every temptation we face is due to inherent sinful nature. We also are partakers of divine nature, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and face the full force of external temptations without love for sinning. For this

reason, most commandments [not all] in the Holy Bible are related to external temptations [Ex. Flee from sexual immorality].

6) The point of the author was to prove that Christ, the High Priest, is distinct, great, and better from the Old Testament high priests:

❖ **Hebrews 4:15**, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **one who in every respect has been tempted as we are**, yet without sin.

❖ **Hebrews 5:1-3**, For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, **since he himself is beset with weakness**. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.

### Two observations:

- ▶ You may not want to have a Christ who is only sinless **and has no experience of human struggles and weaknesses**. [How can He sympathize?]
- ▶ You may not want to have a Christ who is only human **and has no sinlessness and holiness in Him**. [How can He help and become the source of salvation?]

**Point:** We need a Redeemer who fiercely faced temptations just as we are but at the same time, as a human, was sinless and holy in resisting the enticements. That's what Christ Jesus is.

- ▶ Therefore, Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses and help us.

**Illustration:** Farmer—boy—puppies

❖ **Hebrews 4:15**, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses [HE IS ABLE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES]

❖ “మనతో సహానుభవము లేనివాడు”

❖ “जो हमारी निर्बलताओं में हमारे साथ दुखी न हो सके”

**Point: Christ's empathy with our weaknesses is real and redemptive.**

**Sympathy:** Greek “**sympatheō**”—to be affected with the same feeling as another—co-sufferer

**Observe:** This does not speak about just a **sympathetic feeling** but also carries the element of **active help**.

- ❖ **Hebrews 2:18**, For because he himself has suffered when tempted [**real**], he is **able to help** those who are being tempted [**redemptive**].

**Weaknesses:** “Without strength”—no strength to fight against temptations; no strength to persevere under afflictions; no strength to face physical, emotional, and mental pain.

**Insight:**

- ▶ **Christ’s sympathy is counteractive to how we react in the family** [marriage and parenting]. We are unsympathetic towards the weaknesses of one another, often criticizing, judging, poking harsh words, demeaning, grumbling, repetitive accusation, threatening...etc.
- ▶ Christ is sympathetic in His perfection [without sin]. **How difficult for us to be sympathetic when we are right!** Learn sympathy from Christ.

**This is the emphasis [application and mandate] because of who Christ is [high priest, sympathetic, able to help in our weaknesses]:**

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:16**, **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
  - ▶ కృప పొందునట్లు ధైర్యముతో కృపాసనమునొద్దకు చేరుదము...
  - ▶ इसलिये आओ, हम अनुग्रह के सिंहासन के निकट हियाव बान्धकर चलें...

**Confidence:** “the freedom to speak all things”, freedom to approach and talk openly

**Why is confidence required?** Look at how terrifying it was to approach God in OT:

- ❖ **Leviticus 16:1-2**, “The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron [*Nadab and Abihu*], when they **drew near** before the Lord and died, and the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die..”
  - Once a year, Day of Atonement [Yom Kippur]
- ❖ **Lev. 16:3**, But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.
- ❖ **Lev. 16:4**, He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

- ❖ **Lev. 16:11**, Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself.
  - ❖ **Lev. 16:14**, And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.
  - ❖ **Lev. 16:15**, Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.
  - ❖ **Lev. 16:16**, Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.
- ▶ Traditionally, a rope was tied around his waist.

**Observe:** The modern-day generation has no sense of their own wretchedness. They need God only to help in delivering them from earthly problems.

**Note:** If we understand the magnificence of God's holiness and the depravity of our nature, we will consider the depth of this passage. Therefore,

- ❖ **Leviticus 16:1-2**, "The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron [*Nadab and Abihu*], when they **drew near** before the Lord and died, and the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die.."
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:16**, Let us then with confidence **draw near** to the throne of grace,

**How do we get this confidence to draw near to the Holy and Awesome God?**

Because of the finished work of Christ on the cross (**Hebrew 4:14-16, Christ's high priestly work and sympathy**).

- ❖ **Hebrews 10:21-22**, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
- ❖ **1 John 2:1-2**, My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

**Hebrews 4:16**, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, **that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

**Note:** There is no reason for us to dwell in weakness. We are weak [no doubt] but we must not live in weakness. We must run to the Throne of Grace and find strength in our weakness. If we are not conquering weaknesses, it is that we are weak but because we are not running to the presence of God and pouring ourselves in prayer for help.

### **What did Christ do in His temptation?**

- ❖ **Hebrews 5:7**, In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, **with loud cries and tears**, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.
- ❖ **Luke 22:42-43**, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

**Generally, when we face hard times, we seek sympathy and refuge in the following things:**

- ▶ People
- ▶ Stay alone
- ▶ Entertainment

**Hebrews 4:16**, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, **that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

**Stuart Briscoe:** JUSTICE is getting what we do deserve. MERCY is not getting what we do deserve. GRACE is getting what we do not deserve.

**Throne of Grace [strange bcos throne is known for judgment?]: The throne of Grace is the Gracious presence of God.** Come to the gracious God in our weaknesses. Don't run away from Him. He gives the grace to help in times of need. He doesn't condemn.

**Throne of Judgment:** Don't fall into unbelief and run away from God who is your only hope. You will face judgment.

**Dane Ortlund in “Gentle and Lowly”:** What elicits tenderness from Jesus is not the severity of the sin but whether the sinner comes to him. Whatever our offense, he deals gently with us. If we never come to him, we will experience a judgment so fierce it will be like a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth at us (Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21). If we do come to him, as fierce as his lion-like judgment would have been against us, so deep will be his lamb-like tenderness for us (cf. Rev. 5:5–6; Isa. 40:10–11). We will be enveloped in one or the other. To no one will Jesus be neutral.

- ❖ **[1] Hebrews 4:1, Therefore,** while the promise of entering his rest still stands, **let us fear** lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
- ❖ **[2] Hebrews 4:11, Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
- ❖ **[3] Hebrews 4:14,** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast our confession.**
- ❖ **[4] Hebrews 4:16, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,** that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**Note:** The goal of warnings and exhortations was not to present God as a **scary being** or to **scare people away from God**. It is to show both the **loveliness of God** and also the **consequences of unbelief in Him**. It is to **draw people to God** that such balance was maintained.

**Hebrews 4:16,** “that we may receive mercy and find grace to help **in time of need [weaknesses].**” **Is there any a time that we are not in need?**

**Jerry Bridges:** “Our worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace.”

**Point:** We need God in **our sins**, in **our fears**, in **our afflictions**, in **our anxieties**, in **our weaknesses**.

**Jonathan Edwards' 65<sup>th</sup> Resolution:** Resolved, very much to exercise myself in this all my life long, viz. with the greatest openness I am capable of, to declare my ways to God, and lay open my soul to him: all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires, and everything, and every circumstance...

**Remember:** The only person before whom you can be hundred per cent transparent and yet find love and acceptance is the gracious and merciful God.

**A recent prayer I wrote to my God in my pain:** O Lord, my heart is filled with pain, and my emotions are wrenched. I feel completely broken and messed up. Who can know and empathise with the depths of my pain besides you? I am weak and helpless. I am unable to focus and sleep well. I am not in a position to deal with my heart's condition. Have mercy on me, O God, and heal me. Make me emotionally healthy, mentally sound, and inwardly pure. I look unto you and don't turn your face away from me, for where else will my help come from? Are you not my Maker and Redeemer? If you don't come to my help, I will perish in my affliction. Come, O Lord, and heal my soul!

**Consider:** Do we believe that God's mercy/grace are sufficient to help us in time of need?

**John Bunyan's Illustration:** In his classic book *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan gave a powerful illustration of this truth. "Christian" meets a helper named "Interpreter." Interpreter's job is to teach Christian crucial truths he will need for the journey of faith.

Interpreter shows Christian a fire that is burning against a wall, and how someone was standing by the fire constantly trying to put the fire out by pouring water on it. But the fire did not go out. Not only did it not go out, it burned higher and hotter.

So Christian asks Interpreter — What does this mean?

Interpreter explained that the fire is the work of grace that God produces in our hearts — the grace of trust in Christ and love for him. But the devil is constantly trying to put out this fire by pouring on it the water of temptations and worries and trials.

**What Keeps The Fire Burning?** Then Interpreter wanted to show Christian how the fire not only kept burning, but kept burning higher and hotter. So he took Christian around to the back side of the wall, where he saw **a man who had a jar of oil in his hand which he poured continually into the fire.**

**So Christian asked again — what does this mean?**

And Interpreter answered — This is Christ, who continually with the oil of his grace maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, no matter what the Devil can do, the souls of his people prove gracious still. (2 Cor 12:9)

**“And in that you saw that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire; this is to teach you that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.”**

**Summary: Hebrews 4:14-16,** “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

**Invitation to unbelievers:** Turn to Christ for your salvation

**Invitation to believers:** Turn to Christ for your sanctification