

In this series of articles we're looking at Hebrews 4:14-16. Allow me to quote verses 14-15 that we'll touch on in this article: "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." In my last article, we touched on the fact that the writer of Hebrews exhorts Christians to, "...hold fast our confession." I noted that a succinct confessional statement comes from the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:9-10: "[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." Last time we saw that Jesus is the *Source of Our Confession*; today I want to touch on the fact that Jesus has:

—Sympathy for Our Condition

We begin to see this wonderful truth in verse 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." I would call your attention to the double negative in that phrase: "For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weakness..." One scholar writes that the double negative: "reinforces the affirmation that we are certain that Christ, through his compassion, will make up for our lack of strength." This is an amazing truth that we should spend more time meditating on. Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless Son of God left the glories of heaven; took on flesh and lived on this sin cursed earth among sinful people; he went through all manner of temptation; he never sinned, and yet, he can and does sympathize with our weakness.

The following is just a sampling of the ways in which Jesus was tempted by Satan. "Command these stones to become bread; throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple" (Mt. 4:3, 6). In other words, "test God and see if he'll provide for you, Jesus." The devil even said that he would give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" if Jesus would worship him (Mt. 4:8-9). Even though Jesus never sinned, he did experience the essential root causes of all the temptations of mankind and he experienced them to

the *greatest degree*. This is in contrast to anyone who would somehow believe that, "Jesus does not know what I'm going through."

Twentieth century Christian apologist and author, C.S. Lewis, in his well-known book entitled, "Mere Christianity," once addressed those who believe that Jesus could not have been tempted in the same degree that we're tempted because he is God incarnate. Lewis writes, "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later....We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means...." And yet, Jesus is full of sympathy for weak and hurting Christians.

It's important to note that the word translated, "sympathize" is much more than "feeling sorry for" or "having empathy for" someone and their problems. Jesus does *empathize* with us but he's also both willing and able to give us all that we need in every situation that we face. He's already provided for our greatest need, i.e., bringing broken sinners into a right relationship with a holy God and he continues to provide for the needs of his people daily—even moment by moment. Because of Jesus, God will never fail to provide for every need that his children have according to his perfect will for our lives. Although we're weak; although we've given in to various temptations in our lives; God could no more give up on us than he could or would give up on Jesus! This wonderful truth should give us profound encouragement and comfort! What an amazing blessing to know that our Savior, Jesus, is with us and for us always!

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