

## Hebrews 4. 14-16.

My Bible reading is taken from Hebrews 4, commencing at verse 14.

Seeing then that *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 sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.<sup>1</sup>

The 'seeing then' at the beginning of verse 14 points us back to the section *at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3*, where the writer had spoken earlier of our Lord Jesus as a High Priest.<sup>2</sup>

And our passage, in part at least, is the writer's response to the taunts and jeers of non-Christian Jews, who would have been quick to argue that, in *their* eyes, Christianity was clearly lacking and deficient, in that it offered *nothing to compare* with the elaborate ritual and ceremony of their awe-inspiring temple,<sup>3</sup> and in particular that the Christian faith had on offer no visible high priest with his sacred office, his splendid robes and his most impressive ministries.

'Ah, but', the writer responds, *we have something better ... we have 'a great High Priest'*. And, from our brief reading this evening, I want to extract three very simple points; namely, first, **what**, as Christians, **we do have**; second, **what we do not have**; and third, **what we have to do**.

First then, **what we do have**.

'**Seeing then**', the writer assures us, '**that we have a great High Priest**'.

As some of you will likely know, the word '**have**' or 'having' is *one* of the key words of the letter, as the writer encourages his readers to continue in their Christian faith by drawing their attention to some of the distinctive possessions and blessings enjoyed by Christians.

In chapter **6**, he tells us that we are those who 'have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we **have** as an anchor of the soul, both secure and firm, and which enters into that within the veil'<sup>4</sup> – that we have a hope which is anchored (moored, we might say) – within the heavenly sanctuary. In chapter **10**, he tells us that we **have** 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus'.<sup>5</sup>

And again, in chapter **13** that, 'We **have** an altar (which I take to be a reference to our Lord Jesus and His sacrificial death viewed as our true peace {or 'fellowship'} offering<sup>6</sup>) of which they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle'.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, he opens chapter **8** with the words, 'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum (this is the chief, the crowning point), we **have** such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens', with that expression 'such an high priest' pointing us back to the end of chapter 7, '*such* an high priest became us, who {*in His character*} is holy, harmless, undefiled, who {*in His glory and exaltation*} is separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; and who {*in His sacrifice*} does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people's, for this (offering up a sacrifice) He did once for all when He offered up Himself<sup>8</sup> ... and this, the writer insists, is the kind of high priest we *have*.

And our high priest is 'great'. So then, far from being badly off in comparison with unbelieving Jews, these Christian converts had (and we have) what Judaism never had! It has been estimated that there were about 100,000 Jewish **priests** in New Testament days.<sup>9</sup> And, at the time, the nation boasted many **chief priests** – these being members of the families of the various recent high priests, and who (the chief priests) played a key role in opposing our Lord during His public ministry and in orchestrating His arrest by the Romans, and who, largely out of envy, were among those who shouted loudest for His crucifixion.<sup>10</sup>

And, over the history of the nation, there had been in excess of 80 **high priests**. Although, sadly, in the more recent past, many of these had not been *legitimate* high priests, not being descended from Aaron at all. Over the previous 240 years or so (stretching back to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees) there had been no less than 42 high priests<sup>11</sup> (on average a different high priest every six years or so), five of whom had been appointed by Greek kings, eight by popular decree, twenty-two by Herod and his family, and the remaining

seven by Roman governors, with the office often going to the highest bidder. It was neither a pretty nor an edifying story!

But (leaving aside these less worthy specimens) even Aaron himself (though called and appointed by God<sup>12</sup>) had not been a *Great High Priest*.<sup>13</sup>

We have then a High Priest who transcends all others.<sup>14</sup>

And the writer rapidly turns our attention from *what* He is, to *where* He is, and to *who* He is.

First, the writer tells us where He has gone; 'we have a Great High Priest', he says, 'who has **passed through the heavens**' (not, we note, as in the King James Version, 'into' the heavens). The writer uses the same word that we find, for example, in the statement of the apostle John concerning our Lord Jesus that, 'He must needs go *through* Samaria',<sup>15</sup> and in the declared intention of the apostle Paul, 'I will come to you, when I shall pass *through* Macedonia'.<sup>16</sup>

The reference to our Lord's passage through the heavens serves not only to explain why it is that the Christian has no visible high priest, but also to show that our Great High Priest is infinitely superior to Aaron and his many successors.

For even Aaron and his legitimate successors had never 'passed through' the regions which our Lord has. On the Jewish annual Day of Atonement, they (the high priests in Israel) were privileged, having first sacrificed animal offerings at the brazen altar, to 'pass through' the court of the tabernacle (God's appointed dwelling-place on earth in ancient days), through the first curtain-veil, through the holy place, and then through the second curtain-veil,<sup>17</sup> into what was known as 'the holy of holies' to sprinkle blood both on and before the mercy-seat situated there.

But our Great High Priest towers over them all, in that He has passed, the writer says, not through the various compartments of some earthly structure (whether that of tabernacle or temple, even if built carefully according to God's pattern<sup>18</sup>), but through the heavens, through both the atmospheric heavens and the vast starry regions, and whatever else may be out there.<sup>19</sup>

Chapter 9 verse 11 speaks of that '*greater and more perfect tabernacle* not made with hands, that is, not of this creation', to which verse 12 adds, concerning the Lord Jesus, 'not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered *the Most Holy Place* once for all'. The writer returns to the same point in verse 24 of that chapter – 'Christ is *not* entered into the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true; but *into heaven itself*, now to appear in the presence of God for us', there to intercede for every last one of His people. He has passed, that is, not through the *shadow* but through the *substance* ... not through the *type* but through the *reality* ... into the immediate presence of God Himself.<sup>20</sup>

What dignity then is His! According to chapter 7, He is 'made higher than the heavens',<sup>21</sup> as Paul would doubtless have expressed it, 'ascending up far above all heavens', transcending all limitations of space.<sup>22</sup>

Having told us *what* He (our Saviour) is (namely, 'a Great High Priest'), and having told us *where* He is (namely, having passed through the heavens), the writer tells us *who* He is; namely, '**Jesus the Son of God**' ... by *name* 'Jesus'; by *title* 'the Son of God'.

The original readers would have known well that at the close of their Old Testament there was a prominent high priest with the name 'Jesus' (in Hebrew 'Joshua'), repeatedly described as 'Joshua, the son of Jehozadak' (six times in all<sup>23</sup>). But Jesus, *our* High Priest, is *not* the son of Jehozadak, nor indeed does He ever wear filthy garments, nor does He ever need iniquity to pass from Him (perish the thought), as, according to Zechariah chapter 3, *that* Joshua/Jesus certainly did.<sup>24</sup>

Nor, for that matter, is *our* great High Priest, as were each of the legitimate high priests in ancient Israel, 'a son of Aaron'. For, as the writer points out in chapter 7, 'it is evident that our Lord sprang out of *Judah* of which tribe Moses spoke *nothing* concerning priesthood'.<sup>25</sup> Our great High Priest is neither son of Jehozadak nor son of Aaron; *He* is none less than *the Son of God*.

On the one hand, His name – *Jesus* – stresses His humanity, a fact brought out clearly for us in chapter 2: 'we see *Jesus*, who was made a *little lower than the angels* (on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour) that He by the grace of God should *taste*

*death* ('should die',<sup>26</sup> that is) for (on behalf of) every one',<sup>27</sup> directing us back to His earthly history and experience.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, His title '*Son of God*' stresses His divine dignity and status, brought out for us, not in chapter 2, but in chapter 1: (not there, '*lower* than the angels', but) '*so much better* than the angels<sup>29</sup> ... for to which of the angels did He (God) ever say, You are my Son?'<sup>30</sup>

No other high priest was ever called 'Great' ... no other high priest ever 'passed through the heavens' ... no other high priest carries the title 'Son of God'. Son of God! Note that title, and remember that, according to Hebrews 1, 'as to (with regard to) *the Son*', God says, 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth; and *the heavens* are the works of your hands'<sup>31</sup> – the what? 'the heavens'. And the time came, the writer is saying, when the Son of God passed through *the very heavens* which His *own* hands had once made.

Moving on then from my first point ('what we do have'), my second point is, **what we do not have.**

The writer's words, 'we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses' served to meet head on the fairly obvious objection that, *if* our Great High Priest is as great, as glorious and as dignified as he (the writer) claimed, both in terms of His divine nature (as God's Son) and in terms of His heavenly location, then does it not follow that He must therefore be remote and inaccessible, at such an enormous distance from us that we can't seriously expect Him to take any keen interest in us at all?

Ah, but, the writer insists, He is *not* detached, unfeeling and indifferent. Far from it. On account of His truly human experiences of so many kinds of trial and testing when He was here, He is well able to 'sympathize' with us'.<sup>32</sup>

One great Bible scholar wrote that the word translated 'sympathize', 'expresses not simply the compassion of one who regards suffering from without, but the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own', a feeling actually more akin to our English word 'empathy' than to our word 'sympathy'.<sup>33</sup>

Some schools of ancient Greek thought held and taught (wrongly of course) that one of the chief attributes of God was '*apatheia*', freedom from emotion the inability to feel anything, the inability to be affected by anything.

I once read of a school teacher who asked one of her pupils, 'Johnny, what's the meaning of the word 'apathy?' Johnny responded instantly, 'I don't know, Miss – and what's more, *I don't care*'. And, without realising it, Johnny hit the nail on the head – that *is* apathy, the lack of any interest or concern.

But, thank God, our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, isn't like that in the slightest. He isn't apathetic; He is sympathetic. He understands what we face, and, what is more, He cares. He is able to sympathise and to empathise with us.<sup>34</sup>

**'But was in all points<sup>35</sup> tempted like as we are'.**

The writer is saying, 'Yes, He *is now* where none of us have yet been, that is true; but He *has been* where we *are now*', as the writer directs our attention from *where He is in the present* to *where He has been in the past*. For our Lord Jesus has not only passed *through the heavens*, but, prior to that, He passed *through experiences of the severest testing and trial* while on earth. And, as such, He possesses an unrivalled – an unmatched – capacity to sympathise with (to feel with and to suffer along with<sup>36</sup>) all His people in their many trials and troubles.<sup>37</sup>

It goes without saying, of course, that the Lord Jesus did not experience in detail every possible external trial which His people face; which temptations vary, of course, according to whether a person is young or old, is married or single, is powerful or weak, is wealthy or poor, and so forth. But He *did* experience the whole range and gamut of temptations and trials which pressure His people to turn aside from the will of God ... which pressure them to throw in the towel as Christians.

I hardly need to remind you that ...

He knows what it is *to suffer pain, and to feel sorrow.*

He knows what it is *to be poor.*

He knows what it is *to be weary.*

He knows what it is *to be hungry and thirsty.*

He knows what it is *to be rejected*.

He knows what it is *to share a home with unbelievers*, for we remember that, prior to His death and resurrection,<sup>38</sup> none of His brothers believed on Him.<sup>39</sup>

He knows what it is *to be alone*.

He knows what it is *to be humiliated and mocked*.<sup>40</sup>

He knows what it is *to be deserted by friends and hated by foes*.

He knows what it is *to be attacked by Satan*, and how!

And our great High Priest is able to view all such testings of His people the world over *through the eyes (through the lens, if you like) of One who has Himself been tested*.

But, the writer is quick to add, **'yet without sin'**. Literally 'yet apart from sin'.<sup>41</sup> The writer emphasizes that, if the Lord Jesus was altogether *like us* in our *trials*, He was altogether *unlike us* in our *sin*. No lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, or pride of life<sup>42</sup> ever stained or defiled His pure soul.

As our Lord Himself declared at the close of John 14, when the ruler of this world (the devil) came, he found ('he had') 'nothing in' Him;<sup>43</sup> in all likelihood, meaning both (i) that the devil had nothing over Him in a legal sense ... that he had no claim on the Saviour<sup>44</sup> ... and (ii) that he found nothing that he could lay hold on, so as to gain any advantage over Him<sup>45</sup> ... that, in our Lord, he found no combustible material for his fiery darts<sup>46</sup> to ignite.<sup>47</sup>

As you may be aware, the same expression 'without sin' occurs in an entirely different connection at the end of chapter 9; 'Christ', we read, 'was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation'.<sup>48</sup>

There, without, that is, having anything at all to do *at that time* with the removing of sin! There the writer stresses that the work of the cross was a one-time event – a single sacrifice that dealt with sin and sins once and forever. That is, the expression is used by the writer both to safeguard the truth of our Lord's sinless Person at the close of chapter 4, and to safeguard the truth of His finished work at the close of chapter 9.

Having looked briefly at my first two headings (at 'what we do have', and at 'what we do not have'), we come to my third point, which is simply, **'what we have to do'**.

In the King James Version, the exhortation '*Let us*' occurs no less than *thirteen* times in this epistle,<sup>49</sup> a statistic easy to remember because it corresponds exactly with the number of chapters into which men have carved the epistle. And we should note that the tense which the writer uses in our reading<sup>50</sup> conveys the meaning, 'Let us *keep on* holding fast', and, 'Let us *keep on* coming'.<sup>51</sup>

#### **'Let us hold fast our confession'.**

Let us grasp, take firm hold of, and cling to our public confession<sup>52</sup> of Jesus as our High Priest and as God's Son. Let us cling to the open declaration of our faith, just as, at the first, we fled for refuge to grasp and hold fast (the same word) the hope set out before us in the gospel.<sup>53</sup>

#### **'Let us therefore come boldly'.**

Since we *have* such a High Priest,<sup>54</sup> who *now* appears in the presence of God for us,<sup>55</sup> let us not only *go on*,<sup>56</sup> and let us not only *go out* (to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach),<sup>57</sup> but let us *go in*.

'Let us come' – 'let us draw near' – 'let us approach'. This particular word appears often in the Greek Old Testament, and not infrequently, as here, with the meaning of coming before God.<sup>58</sup> And it is hardly surprising therefore that it is another of the key words of this epistle.<sup>59</sup> And, as I mentioned just now, the tense used here conveys the meaning, 'Let us *keep on* coming', 'Let us come *continually*'; in effect, 'let us make daily use' of the throne of grace.

I suppose it is inevitable that, today, we easily miss a great deal of the impact which the writer's words would have had on his original readers.

In Old Testament days, even an Israelite, if he belonged to the wrong tribe (or even if he belonged to the right tribe but came from the wrong family) would incur the judgement both of God and of men, if he presumed to venture even into the *earthly* counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary, and/or attempt to perform those tasks which had been allocated to the God-appointed priests alone. If you doubt me, you have only to ask Korah<sup>60</sup> or King Uzziah.<sup>61</sup>

God spelled out the rules very plainly to Aaron: 'I have given your priest's office to you as ... a gift; and the stranger (any outsider, that is) who comes near shall be put to death'.<sup>62</sup> No messing there! Frankly, what an amazing privilege we have then! For by birth, please remember, we were, and still are, Gentiles. We didn't, and we don't, even belong to the right nation, let alone to the right tribe and family!<sup>63</sup>

And yet we are encouraged, not only to 'come' to God's very throne, but, remarkably, to 'come boldly' ... a point to which the writer returns in chapter 10; 'Having therefore, brethren, *boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus'.<sup>64</sup>

Not, of course, that we dare swagger brazenly or flippantly into God's presence as though it were an entirely normal and natural thing for sinful human beings to meet with God ... as though it is no big deal for you and me to encounter the Lord of the universe.<sup>65</sup>

But we *do* come with boldness, with confidence, with 'openness of speech', literally. This is the word which Mark used in his Gospel when describing the clear disclosure which our Lord made to His disciples for the first time, concerning His forthcoming suffering,<sup>66</sup> and which John used in his Gospel when reporting our Lord's own words to Annas<sup>67</sup> the high priest immediately before His suffering, concerning the openness with which He had always conducted His teaching.<sup>68</sup> We do not, that is, come cowering and cringing with terror before God's throne. Rather, we approach with confidence ... with liberty to pour out our hearts, hiding nothing and speaking (as another has expressed it) with 'free, frank, unreserved speech'.<sup>69</sup>

### ***'To the throne of grace'.***

And what a lovely expression this is, assuring us, at the outset, that there *is* a throne ... that, far above and beyond the turmoil and strife of earth, there exists a centre of supreme power and authority, described later by the writer as 'the throne of the Majesty ('of the Greatness') in the heavens'.<sup>70</sup>

We read elsewhere of the 'throne of His holiness',<sup>71</sup> and of the 'throne of His glory'.<sup>72</sup> And in Revelation chapter 4 we read of a *future* time when flashes of lightning, rumbling noises, and crashes of thunder will issue from God's throne.<sup>73</sup> There the throne of God is seen as active, about to assert itself, poised to erupt in judgement. Frankly, I would think twice about drawing near to *such* a throne.

But, thankfully, as John Chrysostom (the 4<sup>th</sup> century so-called Church Father) once said, '*now* it is a throne of Grace, not a throne of Judgement'.<sup>74</sup>

Not many years after our epistle was written, a Roman poet wrote<sup>75</sup> concerning an altar in Athens, 'There was in the midst of the city an altar belonging to no god of power; gentle Clemency<sup>76</sup> had there her seat, and the wretched made it sacred; never lacked she a new suppliant, none did she condemn or refuse their prayers. All that ask are heard, night and day may one approach and win the heart of the goddess by complaints alone ... The distressed are ever near her, her precinct ever swarms with needy folk ... hither came flocking ... those guilty of grievous crime, and sought for peace'.<sup>77</sup>

But we know that the distressed and needy who flocked to this 'Altar of Clemency' came only to a block of marble, to 'approach' a non-existent goddess! Thank God, we 'come', not to the Altar of Clemency, but to the Throne of Grace, and we approach this gracious throne with boldness because we do so by divine invitation!

### ***'That we may obtain mercy'.***

Literally, 'that we may *receive*' mercy. It is not, please, that we come to 'obtain' mercy in the sense that we somehow need to 'secure' it, as if mercy is something difficult to acquire. Far from it. We 'receive' mercy when we come. God holds it out to us, as it were, as soon as we draw near to Him.

And, again, we '***find grace***'. God's grace (His favour; all the strength, the direction, the support we need to help us through the various duties and demands of life) ... God's grace resides at this throne, just waiting to be dispensed to us.

In summary, in our very drawing near to *this* throne, we receive *mercy for all our past failures and mistakes*; and we find '***help***'-giving<sup>78</sup> *grace to bring us through all our present trials and*

*troubles*. Mercy, if you like, to cover the sins of yesterday, and grace to meet the needs of today.

The expression, '***in time of need***' translates a single word, rendered elsewhere in the New Testament as (i) '*convenient*',<sup>79</sup> (ii) '*opportunity*',<sup>80</sup> and (iii) '*in season*'.<sup>81</sup>

At this throne then, we 'find grace' which provides *convenient, opportune and seasonable* help ... help at exactly the right moment ... 'grace to help *as and when we need it*'.

In one of his many books, C. H. Spurgeon recounts an anecdote told about D. L. Moody, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century American evangelist. On one occasion, the story goes, somebody asked Mr Moody whether he had 'grace enough to be burned at the stake?' When he replied that he did not, the questioner pressed him further, 'Do you not wish that you had?' 'No, sir', replied Mr Moody, 'for I do not need it. What I need just now is grace to live in Milwaukee three days and hold a convention'.<sup>82</sup>

Did you notice those words, 'I do not need it'. And that is precisely the point made in our text; all-sufficient grace<sup>83</sup> to help us *if* and *when* we need it ... never too soon, and never too late.

It has been well said that, 'The "bank" of God's grace is always open when any of His children need to make a "withdrawal"'.<sup>84</sup>

And our part? Simply to accept the divine invitation and 'come boldly to the throne of grace'. For, wonder of wonders, we are entitled, through prayer, to draw freely on the account where God has deposited all His stores of present and future grace. Yes, but how often do I do this?

Some time ago, I was rather taken aback when I came across a claim to the effect that the Lord Jesus 'went more willingly to the cross than we do to the throne of grace'!<sup>84</sup>

To my shame, I knew that to be only too true in my own case. Let me say it again, the Lord Jesus 'went more willingly to the cross than we do to the throne of grace'. Think about it.

And, in closing, I leave you to ponder for yourselves, what, as God's people, we ***do have***, what we ***do not have***, and what we ***have to do***, namely, to *keep on* holding firm to our Christian confession, and to *keep on* drawing near to God's grace-supplying throne. Don't draw back ... draw near!<sup>85</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 4. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> 'The movement of (the writer's) thought is like that of the flowing tide, which falls back upon itself, yet in each successive wave advances to a point beyond that reached by any previous one. Here for the third time Christ is designated a High Priest, and attributes are ascribed to Him as such which are to form the theme of the next great division of the Epistle, wherein the priestly office of Christ is elaborately discussed', A. B. Bruce, *'The Epistle to the Hebrews'*, on Heb. 4. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 13. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. 6. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. 10. 19.

<sup>6</sup> 'All the participants fed together on this sacrifice: the offerer, the priest, and God (symbolically). Eating together had great significance in the ancient Near East ... it symbolized fellowship ... in the peace offering all three participants shared a part. Even the priest's children ate of this offering', Dr Thomas Constable.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. 13. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 7. 26-27. This, the writer insists, is the kind of high priest which 'became us', which was 'fitted' to our need – which was 'suited' to us in every way.

<sup>9</sup> 'By the time of Jesus there were approximately 100,000 priests', 'The Herodians, Priests, Chief Priests and High Priest' (<https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/24c-The-Enemies-of-Jesus-Part-3-The-Herodians-Priests-and-Chief-Priest.pdf>). 'Josephus, the Jewish historian, informs us that there were 100,000 priests who served in the temple in Jerusalem', Gene Rogers (<http://www.itsallaboutrelationship.org/assets/living-in-the-light-series---book-1---the-amazing-light.pdf>).

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 27. 12-23.

<sup>11</sup> See the list at ...

[https://www.bible-history.com/HighPriests/NTHIGHPRIESTSList\\_of\\_Jewish\\_High\\_Priests.htm](https://www.bible-history.com/HighPriests/NTHIGHPRIESTSList_of_Jewish_High_Priests.htm).

<sup>12</sup> Heb. 5. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Aaron was never even given the title 'high priest' in scripture. (The nearest to this is in Heb. 5. 1, 4.) In all, Aaron was spoken of as 'Aaron the priest' 23 times in the Old Testament (from Exod. 31. 10 to Josh. 21. 13), but never as 'the *high* priest'. Jehoiada, the husband of Jehosheba (2 Chron. 22. 11), was the first 'high priest' in Israel to be given the title, 2 Kings 12. 10.

<sup>14</sup> A 'high' priest is a relative term, implying others of lesser degree, yet in this epistle the saints are never referred to as priests. The reason for may be:

(i) that *our attention should be concentrated on the One who represents us in the presence of God*, rather than on our privileges as priests; or

(ii) 'It is noteworthy that the only book of the New Testament which tells of the high-priesthood of Christ never once refers explicitly to the priesthood of His people; for *it is as worshippers that we are bidden to draw near*'.

Robert Anderson, *'Types in Hebrews'*, Kindle locations 583-585.

Both Peter and John make it clear that believers are priests, but then they never refer to our Lord as 'high priest'.

<sup>15</sup> John 4. 4.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. 16. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Heb. 9. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Exod. 25. 9; Exod. 25. 40 (Heb. 8. 5); 1 Chron. 28. 12, 19. "Probably the conception of the tabhanith, the 'model' (Exo\_25:9), also goes back ultimately to the idea that the earthly sanctuary is the counterpart of the heavenly dwelling of a deity [in ancient Near Eastern thought]", Frank M. Cross, 'The Tabernacle', *Biblical Archaeologist* 10:3 (September 1947), 62. Cf. G. Ernest Wright, 'The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East. Part III: The Temple in Palestine-Syria', *Biblical Archaeologist* 7:4 (December 1944), 66.

<sup>19</sup> The heavens which were the work of His own hands, Heb. 1. 10.

<sup>20</sup> What dignity then is His! According to chapter 7 verse 26, He is 'made higher than the heavens' – or, as Paul would doubtless have expressed it, 'ascending up far above all heavens', that being a straight lift from Eph. 4. 10. Our high priest penetrates to the very presence of God.

<sup>21</sup> Heb. 7. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Eph. 4. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Hag. 1. 1, 12, 14; 2. 2, 4; Zech. 6. 11. He is also mentioned in Ezra 3. 2, 8; 5.2; 10.18 and Neh. 12. 26. Not that Joshua is the last Jewish high priest mentioned by name in the Old Testament; see Neh. 3. 1, 20; 12. 10; 13. 4, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Zech. 3. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Heb. 7. 14.

<sup>26</sup> See Matt. 16. 28; Mark 9. 1; Luke 9. 27; John 8. 52.

<sup>27</sup> 'Everyone' or 'every man' is the obvious meaning of the word, rather than 'everything' (as J.N.D.). Cf. 'preach the gospel to all the creation. He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned', Mark 16. 15-16, where the wide expression 'to all creation' clearly means 'to all men'.

<sup>28</sup> Heb. 2. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Heb. 1. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Heb. 1. 5. But the Lord Jesus is not pointed out as Son in chapter 2 – amazingly, we are the sons in chapter 2; verse 10 says that 'it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain (the author, pioneer, file-leader) of their salvation perfect through sufferings'.

<sup>31</sup> Heb. 1. 8-10.

<sup>32</sup> 'His power to sympathise, acquired and guaranteed by His experience of temptation', A. B. Bruce, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews', page 170.



<sup>33</sup> 'It expresses not simply the compassion of one who regards suffering from without, but the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own', B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, on Heb. 4. 15. This is more akin to the English word 'empathy'.

'While the words sympathy and empathy are both used as nouns in a sentence - and, as feelings, one often leads to the other - their meanings are quite different. Sympathy is a shared feeling, usually of sorrow, pity or compassion for another person. You show concern for another person when you feel sympathy for them. For example, when someone loses a loved one, you feel sympathy towards that person and their family. You may share a feeling of sadness with them, but you might not have empathy for their situation if you have not experienced, or cannot imagine experiencing, a death in the family. Empathy is stronger than sympathy. It is the ability to put yourself in the place of another and understand someone else's feelings by identifying with them. With empathy, you put yourself in another's shoes, often feeling things more deeply than if you just felt sympathy.

For example, someone lacking empathy may not be able to understand why another person is upset over a situation if they cannot imagine themselves in that person's place. Someone has empathy if they can put themselves in the same situation and perceive how the other person is feeling, even if they do not share those feelings', <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar/style-and-usage/what-s-the-difference-between-sympathy-and-empathy.html>.

The exact word occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in verse 34 of chapter 10, 'For you suffered together with (you sympathised with) those in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods (possessions), knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance (possession)'.

His request, 'watch with me' in the Garden of Gethsemane, recorded in Matthew 26. 38, revealed His desire in the days of His flesh for the sympathy of those He loved. In the words of David's Psalm 69, prophetically He could say, 'I looked for some to take pity, but there were none; and for comforters, but I found none'.<sup>34</sup> But now He extends His sympathy to those He loves; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities ('of our weaknesses').

<sup>35</sup> 'In every way, 'in all respects' (*κατὰ πάντα*); as in Heb. 2. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Constable on Heb. 4. 15.

<sup>37</sup> He broadened His experience, and can therefore relate to us. Well did Isaac Watts, the 18th century hymnwriter, pen the words ...

Touched with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.  
(*'With joy we meditate the grace'*.)

'Christ has sympathy with their weaknesses because by experience He knows these weaknesses ... Like they, He had been called upon "to hold fast the confession", when the human weakness consisting in the fear of suffering tempted Him to swerve from His appointed path. Having this experience behind Him, He can, when sufferings tempt the readers to the denial of their faith, extend to them the intelligent sympathy which results in mercy and grace.', G. Vos, *The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, pages 30-31.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 7.

<sup>39</sup> John 7. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Jesus endured more than physical suffering. He also endured emotional suffering. He was spit on and mocked.

<sup>41</sup> The same expression 'without sin – apart from sin' – occurs in an entirely different connection at the end of chapter 9 - 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation', Heb. 9. 28 – without having anything at all to do then with the removing of sin! There the writer stresses that the work of the cross was a one-time event – a single sacrifice that took care of my sins forever. That is, the expression is used by the writer to safeguard both the truth of our Lord's sinless Person at the close of chapter 4 and the truth of His finished work at the close of chapter 9.

<sup>42</sup> 1 John 2. 16.

<sup>43</sup> John 14. 30.

- <sup>44</sup> D. A. Carson, pages 508-509; G. R. Beasley-Murray, page 263; C. K. Barrett, page 392.
- <sup>45</sup> F. F. Bruce, page 306.
- <sup>46</sup> Eph. 6. 16.
- <sup>47</sup> John 14. 30.
- <sup>48</sup> Heb. 9. 28. The final instalment of our 'salvation'.
- <sup>49</sup> Heb. 4. 1, 11, 14, 16; 6. 1; 10.22, 23, 24, 12. 1 (2), 28; 13. 13, 15. (ESV and JND rightly add a second in Heb. 12. 28: 'let us offer /serve'.)
- <sup>50</sup> The present (technically, the present active volitive subjunctive).
- <sup>51</sup> 'Robertson's Word Pictures' on Heb. 4. 14 and 16.
- <sup>52</sup> See Westcott, *op cit.*, on Heb. 3. 1; 4. 14..
- <sup>53</sup> Heb. 6. 18.
- <sup>54</sup> Heb. 8. 1.
- <sup>55</sup> Heb. 9. 24.
- <sup>56</sup> Heb. 6. 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Heb. 13. 13.
- <sup>58</sup> "There is a common cultic use for 'to come before God' 'to come to sacrifice' or 'to worship'", Johannes Schneider, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume II, page 683. See, for example, Jer. 7. 16.
- <sup>59</sup> It occurs seven times. For example, 'Wherefore he is able also to save them entirely that *come to God* by him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them', Heb. 7. 25; 'Let us *draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith', Heb. 10. 22. See also Heb. 4. 16; 10. 1; 11. 6; 12. 18, 22. Contrast the time when God 'drove out the man', Gen. 3. 24.
- <sup>60</sup> Num. 16. 40.
- <sup>61</sup> 2 Chron. 26. 16-21.
- <sup>62</sup> Num. 18. 7; cf. Num. 3. 38; 18. 4; 16. 40 and Lev. 21. 17; 21. 21; 22. 3.
- <sup>63</sup> Eph. 2. 11.
- <sup>64</sup> Heb. 10. 19.
- <sup>65</sup> Based on Donald W. McCullough, *The Trivialisation of God*, page 57.
- <sup>66</sup> 'He spoke that saying openly', Mark 8. 32.
- <sup>67</sup> Note, 'Annas therefore ('accordingly', 'then') sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest', John 18. 24, and see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, on John 18. 15-16.
- <sup>68</sup> 'I spoke openly to the world', John 18. 20.
- <sup>69</sup> 'Free, frank, unreserved speech', A. B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, page 172.
- <sup>70</sup> Heb. 8. 1.
- <sup>71</sup> Psa. 47. 8.
- <sup>72</sup> Matt. 19. 28; 25. 31
- <sup>73</sup> Rev. 4. 5; cf. Rev. 11. 19; 16. 18..
- <sup>74</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Homily 7 (accessed at ... <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240207.htm>).

<sup>75</sup> Publius Papinius Statius lived from circa AD 45 to circa AD 96. He wrote the poem '*The Thebaid*' between AD 80 and AD 92. (See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statius>).

<sup>76</sup> 'Clementia' was a Roman goddess, the goddess of clemency, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. See <http://www.thaliatook.com/OGOD/clementia.php>.

<sup>77</sup> Publius Papinius Statius, '*The Thebaid*', Book 12, lines 481-500; accessed at ... <https://www.theoi.com/Text/StatiusThebaid12.html>.

<sup>78</sup> The exact Greek word 'help' occurs only else in Acts 27. 17. But other forms of the word are common; cf. Heb. 13. 6. See '*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', volume I, pages 628-629.

<sup>79</sup> 'When a *convenient* day was come ... Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords', Mark 6. 21.

<sup>80</sup> 'From that time he sought *opportunity* to betray Him', Matt. 26. 16.

<sup>81</sup> 'Be instant (at hand, available) *in season*, out of season', 2 Tim. 4. 2.

<sup>82</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, '*The Salt Cellar*', volume 2, page 405. See also J Sidlow Baxter's version in '*His Part and Ours*', under 'My Grace'.

<sup>83</sup> 2 Cor. 12. 9. We can say that the Lord's grace is 'index-linked' to our need.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Watson. '*Heaven Taken by Storm*', Kindle Location 167.

<sup>85</sup> Heb. 10. 39; Heb. 10. 22.