

## **Christ Is Superior to the Levitical Priesthood**

### **“We Have a Great High Priest”**

#### **Hebrews 4:14-16**

We looked in our last message in this study at the Old Testament high priest to get a better understanding of what they did and a brief comparison between them and our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. As we begin this week in this text of Hebrews, we will find some guidance of what it means to have “a great high priest” and how to apply what we learn to our lives.

As I stated last week when we read through these verses, the first few words – “Seeing then that” – are more pointing ahead to the end of the verse rather than backwards as we would expect from a word often translated “therefore.” That said, we can go back to Hebrews 3:1 where the human writer of this letter cautioned his readers (as well as us today) to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” and see a connecting thread that runs throughout this letter that encourages us to not lose sight of the work of our Saviour in redeeming us from our sins when he paid our sin debt once and for all.

We will take a cue from two words in verse fourteen that should give us great comfort in our life – in both the good times and the bad times: “we have.” The word translated “we have” (root word ἔχω) is one that means to have and hold, implying continued or ongoing possession. In its use in this text, it describes a state of holding or possessing a relationship with the Great High Priest.

Because we have such a Great High Priest:

#### **I. WE HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO “HOLD FAST” TO HIM – vs. 14**

- A. This capability is ours because of the redemptive work of Christ that satisfied the requirements of the Law. Once His work was finished here, He ascended back to heaven

to take up His intercessory work for the believer at the right hand of the Father – “is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”

Hebrews 9:12

<sup>12</sup> Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 9:24

<sup>24</sup> For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

- B. Because (“seeing then”) we have such a Great High Priest that has offered Himself as a permanent sacrifice for our sins, the command here is to “hold fast our profession” in Him.
1. The word from which “let us hold fast” (κρατέω) is taken is from a root word that means “strength” (κράτος) and it gives us the picture of the strength and courage that it will take to hold on to “our profession” in the face of the attacks from the enemy and in the heat of the trials that we will face in life.

Revelation 2:24–25

<sup>24</sup> But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

<sup>25</sup> But that which ye have already **hold fast** till I come.

This is a different word used for the words “hold fast” than what was seen in Hebrews 3:6. There it dealt more with the thing possessed rather than the person doing the holding.

2. “Our profession” is that of professing our faith not only to Christ for salvation but to the world in demonstration of our testimony. It’s dealing with something different than what is meant when we say that someone is a “professing Christian but not a possessing one.”
3. The word for “profession” in this verse (ὁμολογία) is where the English word “homologous” and its synonym “homogeneous” is derived. These English words (the first is a scientific word) mean to be of the same or a similar kind; of uniform structure or composition throughout (i.e., a culturally homogeneous neighborhood).

The Greek word is a compound word that literally translate “the same word” (ὁμοῦ - the same, together; and λόγος – something said, words expressed). The word means that when we, as true believers (possessors), “profess” Him we are agreeing with Him in all that He says. Our faith is anchored in His work and words.

#### Hebrews 2:1

<sup>1</sup> Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

4. The fact that this is given indicates there is the possibility that we could lose our grip, so to speak, on the work that the Savior does for us and fall back into trying to do everything with our own strength.

## II. WE HAVE HIS COMPASSION IN OUR INFIRMITIES – vs. 15

- A. “For” – the reason why we can hold fast our profession is given in this verse.

B. Our Great High Priest is sympathetic to our infirmities, to our weaknesses – “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” – because He knows from personal experience while here on earth as a man the “temptations” that we face.

1. The phrase “be touched with the feeling of” is all one word in the original Greek (συμπαθέω) and is where the English word “sympathize” or “sympathetic” is derived. In its basic form, the English word “sympathize” means to feel or express compassion, as for another’s sufferings.
2. Our Great High Priest is not so far away from us that He doesn’t understand what we are going through but is right there comforting us in our “infirmities,” in those times we are weakened in body or mind.

“The infirmities here are not sufferings but weaknesses, moral and physical, that predispose one to sin, the weaknesses which undermine our resistance to temptation and make it difficult for us to keep from sinning.” (Wuest)

C. The reason Christ, as our High Priest, can be, and is, “touched by the feelings of our infirmities,” that He can be sympathetic toward us, is because He “was in all points tempted like as we are” while He was here on earth in human form.

1. I believe this text points, in a primary way, to the wilderness temptations of Christ immediately following His baptism. Those three temptations follow the three points given in 1 John 2:15-16 that encompass the temptations we face in life. Everything we face when it comes to temptation to sin is summed up in this text.

## 1 John 2:15–16

<sup>15</sup> Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

- a) “The lust of the flesh” – corresponds to the temptation to turn the stones to bread.

### Matthew 4:3

<sup>3</sup> And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

### Luke 4:3

<sup>3</sup> And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

This would have appealed to Jesus’ physical hunger after fasting 40 days. Satan tempted Him to use His divine power to satisfy His physical needs outside of God’s will.

- b) “The lust of the eyes” – corresponds to Satan trying to entice Jesus with the allure of earthly power and possessions, offering Him a shortcut to kingship without the cross.

### Matthew 4:8–9

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; <sup>9</sup> And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

### Luke 4:5–6

<sup>5</sup> And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said unto

him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

- c) “The pride of life” – corresponds to Satan’s temptation of Jesus to prove His divine Sonship by throwing Himself off the temple, prioritizing human recognition and personal glory over submission to God’s plan.

[Matthew 4:5–6](#)

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

[Luke 4:9–11](#)

<sup>9</sup> And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: <sup>10</sup> For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: <sup>11</sup> And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

2. Jesus Christ was able to understand our infirmities, our weaknesses, because he had those same “weaknesses” common to our human nature: i.e., hunger, thirst, weariness, etc. We saw this briefly in Hebrews 2:18.

[Hebrews 2:18](#)

<sup>18</sup> For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to **succour** [provide aid or help] them that are tempted.

[Mark 9:22](#)

<sup>22</sup> And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and **help** us.

D. As our Redeemer, our Great High Priest was able to pay our sin debt because He was “without sin” – He was literally separated and apart from sin, which I believe shows He could not have sinned.

1. I mentioned this text previously and said we would come back to it when we dealt with this verse in detail. The question that has been debated for ages is, “Was it possible for Jesus to sin when tempted or was it always impossible for him to sin.” In theological terms, this is “peccability” (could have sinned but didn’t) versus “impeccability” (He was inherently unable to sin). As I stated before, I don’t believe Jesus could have sinned – I believe in the impeccability of Christ. As a brief explanation of why, let’s consider a few areas of study.

a) Divine Nature and Human Nature: The Hypostatic Union

(1) The impeccability argument is rooted in the doctrine of the hypostatic union, which affirms that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person. This union means that His divine nature is inseparable from His human nature.

(2) Given that God is inherently holy and incapable of sinning (James 1:13), Jesus, being fully God, could not sin. His divine nature would inherently prevent any possibility of sinning.

b) Scriptural Basis

(1) James 1:13: "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." This verse

supports the idea that as God, Jesus could not be tempted to sin in the same way humans are.

- (2) John 8:46: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Here, Jesus challenges His accusers to prove any sin in Him, reflecting His sinless nature.
- (3) Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." This verse underscores the unchanging nature of Christ, showing that His divine, sinless nature remains constant.

#### c) Theological Implications

- (1) Protection of Divine Attributes: Impeccability protects the integrity of Jesus' divine attributes. If Jesus could have sinned, it would suggest a potential flaw in His divine nature, which contradicts the nature of God as all-holy (Divine holiness) and all-powerful (omnipotence).
- (2) Mission and Redemptive Work: If Jesus had the potential to sin, it would cast doubt on the certainty of His redemptive mission. His impeccable nature ensures that He was the perfect, sinless sacrifice for humanity's sins.

#### d) Nature of Temptation

- (1) Jesus experienced real temptation but in a different manner than humans. His temptations were external, not arising from any internal sinful desires, which aligns with His sinless nature.
- (2) Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This verse shows that while Jesus faced temptation, His sinless nature meant He could not fall into sin.

The impeccability of Christ emphasizes His essential sinlessness, rooted in His divine nature, and insists that His temptations were real but could not lead to sin. This doctrine aims to uphold the purity and perfection of Christ as both fully God and fully man, providing a sinless sacrifice for humanity.

### **III. WE HAVE CONFIDENCE TO GET THE HELP THAT'S NEEDED – VS. 16**

- A. Confidence because of Christ's work as our Great High Priest in paying our sin debt that gives us the capability to hold fast to Him (point I), and because of His compassion for us in understanding from experience what we go through (point II). This is seen in the words "Let us therefore come." We can approach the throne without reprisal or condemnation or question.

The way this term is used carries the idea of "let us keep on coming." "Instead of deserting him, let us make daily use of him [our Great High Priest]. This verb [elsewhere] in Hebrews means reverent approach for worship." (Robertson) We might be able to come boldly but we need to come reverently as well.

- B. The next phrase should be of great comfort and encouragement to us – "boldly unto the throne of grace."
1. The word translated "boldly" is a compound word: the first (πάς) means "all" combined with ῥέω, a word that means to utter, speak, say. It has the idea in the New Testament of freedom in speaking all that one thinks or pleases; confidence or boldness, particularly in speaking.
  2. We have a tremendous opportunity as a child of God because of the work of Christ on the cross for our

redemption as well as His continued work as our Great High Priest in interceding for us with the Father to approach the very throne itself any time we need.

3. "God's throne is become to us a throne of grace through the mediation of our High Priest at God's right hand. Pleading our High Priest Jesus' meritorious death, we shall always find God on a throne of grace." (J-F-B)

C. Two reasons or times to use this boldness:

1. "That we may obtain mercy" – receiving mercy is necessary for us because we are sinners and if we approach the throne without the understanding that we are still sinners then we don't understand our Great High Priest. We need mercy and the closer we get to Him, the more we will understand that. When we stop thinking we need mercy, we have grown cold and indifferent to sin and that's a bad place for a believer to be.

[Isaiah 55:6–7](#)

<sup>6</sup> Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

2. "And find grace to help in time of need" – "strength, help, counsel, direction, support, for the various duties and trials of life. This is what we need next – we all need – we always need. Even when pardoned, we need grace to keep us from sin, to aid us in duty, to preserve us in the day of temptation. And feeling our need of this, we may come and ask of God 'all' that we want for this purpose. Such is the assurance

given us; and to this bold approach to the throne of grace all are freely invited.” (Barnes)

Conclusion: We have the capability to hold fast to our Great High Priest because of what He’s done for us as that High Priest. We also have the knowledge of His compassion for us as we face the many “infirmities” in life. Both of these, then, give us the confidence to know how and where to find the help we need during those trials and weaknesses and how to “obtain,” receive, that help.

These are some of the most helpful verses in the Bible for the believer today as they show both how vital it is that we come to the throne in prayer for help as well as how that is made possible.