Our Sympathetic High Priest

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."—Hebrews 5: 7-10.

The Holy Spirit in this chapter reminds us that two things were necessary to a high priest: first he must be suitable for the men for whom he stood; and next, he must be acceptable with God. "Every high priest taken *from* among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God." He must be fit from both points of view, both manward and God-ward. Our Lord Jesus Christ was ordained of God from of old, and did not of himself assume the position of high priest. The prophets spake of him as the Messiah of God, and Jehovah himself declared: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." When he came into the world the Holy Ghost bore witness to his being the Son of the highest. At his baptism there came a voice from heaven saying: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and that same voice was thrice heard declaring the same fact. The Father has given further testimony to

THE MISSION OF CHRIST,

"in that he hath raised him from the dead," and hath caused him to enter into the heavenly places on our behalf. Moreover, he has given him a pledge that as Melchisedec, being both King and Priest, he shall sit at his right hand until he hath made his enemies his footstool. Our Lord Jesus has been chosen, ordained, and glorified as our "great High Priest that has passed into the heavens." This is the groundwork of our comfort in our Lord Jesus, for we know that he is one with the Father, and that all things are done by him as the Messenger of the covenant, the authorized representative of Jehovah our God.

That is not the point to which I call your attention this morning; I would have you follow the text, and consider the preeminent suitability of our Lord Jesus to be a High Priest for us, viewed from the human side. A high priest must be one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." He must be one who has learned compassion in the school of suffering, so that he can succor the afflicted.

I. First, then, that we may see the suitability of our Lord to deal with us in our cares and sorrows we shall view him

AS A SUPPLIANT.

The text begins with a word which reveals his weakness: "Who in the days of his flesh." Our blessed Lord was in such a condition that he pleaded out of weakness with the God who was able to save. When our Lord was compassed with the weakness of flesh he was much in prayer. It would be an interesting exercise for the younger people to note all the times in which the Lord Jesus is said to have prayed. The occasions recorded are very numerous; but these are no doubt merely a few specimens of a far greater number. This is said to have been the case "in the days of his flesh." This term is used to distinguish his life on earth from his former estate in glory. "The days of his flesh" intend this mortal life—the days of his weakness, humiliation, labor, and suffering.

Among the days of his life on earth there were some which peculiarly deserved to be called "the days of his flesh"—days in which his feebler nature pushed itself to the front. Then men saw less of his greatness as a teacher and more of his suffering as man. I should call that one of the days of his flesh when he went to Gethsemane, and "was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He was very heavy, because the shadow of his cross fell upon him with a denser darkness as he drew nearer to his death upon it. When the dread desertion by God which was the centre of his grief began to startle him; when men esteemed him "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," then were "the days of his flesh." Prostrate under the olives, pouring out his inmost soul in plaintive entreaties, even to a bloody sweat, you see your Lord a suppliant in weakness—"in the days of his flesh."

Brethren, I beseech you to think of our Lord's pleading "in the days of his flesh" as a matter of fact. Do not dream of him as though he were a phantom, and of his prayers as if they were part of a mere show. He was a real man, and his prayers were as real as your's can be. Believe in Jesus as man. You would be indignant at any one who would diminish the glory of his Godhead, and most justly so; but oh, do not yourself take away from him the truth of his humanity; he was in very deed made flesh and dwelt among us. This was the case even when his apostles beheld his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" We must get a firm grip of the true humanity, or else we lose the sacrificial death, the resurrection, and all the rest; and the brotherhood of our Lord, which is a grand source of consolation, also disappears.

In the days of his flesh our divine Lord felt.

HIS NECESSITIES.

The words: "He offered up prayers and supplications," prove that he had many needs. Men do not pray and supplicate unless they have greater need than this world can satisfy. Men work for what they can get by working, and pray for that which can by no other means be obtained. The Saviour offered no petitions by way of mere form; his supplications arose out of an urgent sense of his need of heavenly aid. It is difficult to realize it, but so it is, that our divine and innocent Saviour placed himself in such a condition for our sakes that his needs were manifold. Specially in the garden he cried again and again: "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." He can have pity upon you in your loneliness, your distraction, your apparent desertion, your sinking of heart, your sorrowfulness even unto death. Look to him then in your night of weeping, and be of good cheer.

Those of you who are only now beginning to pray, I would encourage you to remember Jesus as setting you the example of praying. If your prayers have but few words in them, and are mainly made up of crying and tears, yet in this they are like those of your Saviour, and so you may hope they will be accepted. Jesus prayed under discouragements; what he did himself he will help you to do. He knows what the agony of prayer means, and he will cast a brother's eye on you when in the bitterness of your repentance you seek the Lord. How clear it is that we have a suitable High Priest, of tender heart, and loving soul!

Further, let us see how like the Son of God was to us in

HIS INTENSITY

of prayer. When a man so courageous, so patient as Jesus, betakes himself to cries and tears, we may be sure that the sorrow of his heart has passed all bounds. His soul within him must have been bursting with grief. We know it was so by another sign; for the life-blood forgot to course in its natural channels, and overflowed its banks in a sweat of blood. I do not think, as some do, that it was merely a sweat such as is common to labor; but I believe it was a sweat of blood, or the expression would not have been used, "as it were great drops of blood." A sweat of blood has now and then been seen upon men in great and fatal alarm; but the Saviour's was more wonderful than any of these cases; for so profuse was this bloody sweat, that it was, as it were, great drops of it "falling down to the ground." This was a prayer indeed; supplication which exhausted his whole manhood. Body, soul and spirit were new upon the rack of anguish, and upon the strain of agony. He pleaded with God after a more piteous, painful, terrible and powerful sort than you and I have yet attained to. But, brethren, here is the point: if it comes to your case to be in a dark, dark hour, and to be praying with the heavens like brass above your head, and if you are obliged to cry aloud, and weep your soul away, then remember Jesus in the days of his flesh.

Still, to proceed with the text: we have seen our Lord's needs, and the intensity of his prayer; now note

HIS UNDERSTANDING

in prayer. He prayed "unto him that was able to save him from death." The expression is startling; the Saviour prayed to be saved. This passage may be read in two ways: it may mean that he would be saved from actually dying if it could be done consistently with the glorifying of the Father; or it may mean that he pleaded to be saved out of death, though he actually deceased into it. The word may be rendered either *from* or *out of*. The Saviour viewed the great Father as able to preserve him in death from the power of death, so that he should triumph on the cross; and also as able to bring him up again from among the dead. He believed in the power of God to save him from death, and even when cast down with fear he did not let go his hold on God. He pleaded just as you and I should plead, impelled by fear and encouraged by faith. Let us imitate his intensity, his intelligence, and his faith.

It will further help you if I now call your attention to

HIS FEAR.

Martyrs have died without the preceding dread which fell upon our Lord; but remember, that the help of God which sustained them was taken away from Jesus; and consider, also, that his death was special, and differed from that of all others of our race; for in that death there was condensed the penalty due to sin. To the righteous one death is not now a penalty, it is a mode of going home; to Jesus it was in the fullest sense the penalty of death for human guilt. He saw before him, as we do not, all the pains and torments of death; he knew what he had to bear, and foretasted in the garden the smart involved in being a surety for sinful man. His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." So when you tremble after sipping your cup of bitterness, think of Jesus trembling too. When you, in entering into the valley of death's shade, feel yourself greatly disturbed at the prospect before you, think of Jesus who was heard in his fear. Come, you that fear, and find help in one who also feared. Borrow courage from one who out of fear prayed himself into victory.

But then notice another thing in the text—namely,

HIS SUCCESS

in prayer, which also brings him near to us. He was heard "in that he feared." Oh, my soul! to think that it should be said of thy Lord that he was heard, even as thou, a poor suppliant, art heard. Yet the cup did not pass from him, neither was the bitterness thereof in the least abated. When we are compelled to bear our thorn in the flesh and receive no other answer than "My grace is sufficient for thee," let us see our fellowship with Jesus and Jesus' fellowship with us.

II. Let us now spend a few moments in beholding our Lord

AS A SON.

His prayers and pleadings were those of a son with a father: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The Sonship of our dear Saviour is well attested. Thrice did the voice out of the excellent glory proclaim this truth, and he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Yes; he that cried, he that wept, he that pleaded until he came to a bloody sweat, and he from whom the cup could not pass till he had drained it to the dregs, was nevertheless the only begotten Son of God. So, my brother, when you are put to great grief do not doubt your sonship. What son is there whom the father chasteneth not? When you are in heaviness through manifold trials, do not listen to the insinuations of the enemy: "If thou be the Son of God." Yes, if you should have to ask: "Why has thou forsaken me?" do not doubt your sonship. You are as much a son when you walk in the dark as when you rejoice in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

Being a Son, the text goes on to tell us that he had to learn obedience. Is not that a wonderful thing? As man our Saviour had to learn. He was of a teachable spirit, and the Lord himself instructed him. All God's children go to school, for it is written: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." The lesson is practical—we learn to obey. Our Lord took kindly to this lesson; he did always the things which pleased the Father. This is our time of schooling and discipline, and we are learning to obey, which is the highest and best lesson of all. How near this brings our Lord to us, that he should be a Son and should have to learn! We go to school to Christ and with Christ, and so we feel his fitness to be our compassionate High Priest.

Jesus must needs learn by suffering. As swimming is only to be learned in the water, so is obedience only learned by actually doing and suffering the divine will. Obedience cannot be learned at the university, unless it be at the College of Experience. You must suffer the commandment to have its way with you, and then it will educate you. We think when we are first converted that we have learned obedience, and assuredly we have in a measure received the spirit by which we obey; but no man knows obedience till he has actually obeyed, both in an active and a passive sense. Even the Lord Jesus must come under the law, honor the law, and suffer the law, or else he cannot learn obedience. Who knows

WHAT IT IS TO OBEY

God to the full until he has had to lay aside his own will in the most tender and painful respects? To plead with God for the life of a beloved child, and yet to see that dear child die, and to kiss the rod—this is to learn obedience. To go alone and plead with God for the life of a husband or wife, and agonize with him for the boon, and then to be compelled to weep at the new-made grave, and yet to say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—this is to learn obedience. A Son learning obedience: that is our Lord. May we not joyfully walk with him in all the rough paths of duty? May we not safely lean on the arm of one who knows every inch of the way?

Our Lord learned by suffering mixed with prayer and supplication. His was no unsanctified sorrow, his griefs were baptized in prayer. It cost him cries and tears to learn the lesson of his sufferings. The practical point I am trying to drive at in my poor way is this: let us trust ourselves with him who as a Son knows the training and discipline of sons. Being yourself a son, look up and see what the elder brother endured, and know that "in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." You who are afraid that you never will be the children of God, come and hear your Saviour cry as he rises from prayer: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Sons of men, whither do you wander? Why not come to him who is made like to your selves? If you have never trusted him before, I think that you should begin this morning, now that you see his fellowship with you, his sympathy with you. I do not at this time set him forth to you in his power and glory—that I will do on another occasion; but I bring him before you in his weakness and humiliation, hoping thereby to attract to him the poor and needy who need such a helper.

III. Time fails me, and therefore we can do no more than spend a brief time in beholding the Lord Jesus

AS A SAVIOUR.

It is to this end that he pleaded as a Suppliant and learned obedience as a Son. As a Saviour he is perfect. Being made perfect through suffering, he is able fully to discharge his office. Nothing is wanting in the character and person of Christ in order to his being able to save to the uttermost. He is a Saviour, and a great one. You are wholly lost, but Jesus is perfectly able to save. You are sore sick, but Jesus is perfectly able to heal. You have gone, perhaps, to the extreme of sin; he has gone to the extreme of atonement. In every office essential to our salvation Jesus is perfect. Nothing is lacking in him in any one point. However difficult your case may seem, he is equal to it. Made perfect by suffering, he is able to meet the intricacies of your trials, and to deliver you in the most complicated emergency.

Observe that it is eternal salvation: "the author of *eternal* salvation." Jesus does not save us to-day and leave us to perish to-morrow; he knows what is in man, and so he has prepared nothing less than eternal salvation for man. A salvation which was not eternal would turn out to be no salvation at all. Those whom Jesus saved are saved indeed. Man can be the author of temporary salvation; but only he who is "a High Priest forever" can bring is a salvation which endures forever. An eternal salvation is worth having, is it not? Jesus does not give a salvation which will let you fall from grace, and perish after all; but a salvation which will keep you to the end—though you should live to be as old as Methuselah. Salvation to eternity and through eternity is provided by Jesus.

Furthermore, inasmuch as he has learned obedience, and become a perfect High Priest, his salvation is wide in its range, for it is unto "all them that obey him." Not to some few, not to a little select company here and there, but "unto all them that obey him." One of his first commandments is "Repent." Will you then obey him in that, and quit your sin? Then he is the author of eternal salvation to you.

HIS GREAT COMMAND

is: "Believe and live." Will you trust him, then? For if you do, he is the author of eternal salvation to you. He whom I have tried to describe with all my heart—this blessed sympathetic fellow-sufferer of ours—he is willing and able to save all of you who will obey him at this moment by trusting him.

Note, that he is all this forever, for he is "a priest forever." If you could have seen him when he came from Gethsemane, you think you could have trusted him. Oh, trust him to-day, for he is "called of God to be an high priest after the order of Melchisedec," and that order of Melchisedec is an everlasting and perpetual priesthood! He is able to-day to plead for you, able to-day to put away your sins. Oh that God the Holy Spirit may lead many of you to come and obey him at once!

A heavy atmosphere fills this Tabernacle this morning, making it difficult to speak and more difficult to hear; but yet if some sudden news came to you, as the burning of your house, or the death of a dear child, you would shake off all lethargy and wake up from all dulness and heaviness of spirit, and therefore I claim your liveliest thoughts for the solemn subject which I have introduced to you. Think much of the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who for our salvation loved and lived and served and suffered. He that made man was made man. As a suppliant, with cries and tears he pleaded with God, even he before whom the host of heaven bow adoringly. He has still that tenderness to which he was trained by his sufferings; he bids you now come to him. Ye that love him approach him now, and read the love which is engraven on his heart. You who have not hitherto known him, come boldly to him and trust him who has come so near to you. The Man is very near akin unto us. Behold how he loves us! He bends to us with eternal salvation in his hands. Believe in him and live. God grant it! Amen.

A Great Oak.

"Nelson Drummond is a great oak," Hans Krug, the wholesale grocer of Liberty Street, said to his wife one evening. "If there's anybody of my acquaintance ever sprung from a little acorn, he has. Who would have prophesied ten years ago, when we first saw Nelson—a little ragged lad of ten—that he could ever rise to the position he holds to-day? No one would have imagined such a thing. There he was, poor and neglected, the child of a poor drinking father and a weak mother."

"But I can't see why you call him a great oak," said Mrs. Krug, with some curiosity. "The fact that he is going to be your private secretary isn't saying that he's a wonderfully brilliant 'light,' is it?"

"Well, that depends on what you have to say concerning a little story I am about to tell you. I've just found out that Hiram Gardner offered Nelson three hundred dollars a year more than I offered, if he would give me the slip, but the great-hearted young fellow replied, 'No; I have promised Hans Krug, and I wouldn't break my word for any money.'"

"That sounds good."

"*Sounds* good! It *is* good. He shall not lose by it, either. I saw old Drummond to-day, and I hardly knew him, he looked so neat and respectable; he's reformed, you know, and is working at his trade. I spoke to him about Nelson's being engaged to me, and I wish you could have seen and heard him. His eyes filled with tears as he said, with a trembling voice, 'That boy—*our* boy—is one of a thousand. I can't just understand it, but he's been climbing up slow and steady, and he's put a new lease of life in his mother and rather, some way, bless him! We've left our bad ways, and are trying to follow after our Master.' What do you think of that wife?"

The bell rang.

"You'd better turn down your trousers, husband; it doesn't add to your good looks to have them tucked up above your boots," Mrs. Krug said, hastily.

"I've been wading through the mud—Why, how do you do, Nelson? Come right into this room."

Mr. Krug led the way into his cosy study, a delightful little room, but rather disorderly, as Mr. Krug seemed to enjoy throwing his books around the floor. Nelson Drummond mentally resolved that henceforth the room should be kept in "apple-pie order."

"Now, my boy," said Mr Krug, cheerily, as soon as the study door was shut, "I want you to tell me who ever started your climbing up?"

"'Climbing up,' sir?"

"Yes. Who helped you on the first round?"

"The Master, sir," he answered respectfully.

"How? When?"

"A long time ago I slipped into a church, and I heard the minister read, 'What's that to thee? Follow thou me.' He explained what it meant; and when I got back home and saw all the wickedness around me, I resolved to rise above it; I, too, would follow. This, sir," taking a small Bible from his pocket, "has helped me to climb—has helped me to become a fisher of men."

"Eh? What's that? 'A fisher of men?'"

Nelson turned to the first chapter of the gospel of Mark, and read, "'Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed him.'"

"Is that in the Bible? Let me see. Oh the print's too fine! Here, find it in this," and Mr. Krug took from the shelf a larger Bible, dusty, as if seldom disturbed.

Nelson found the passage, and Hans Krug read it aloud: then he said slowly, but earnestly:—"And so that's the secret of your success is it? As you climb up the ladder, you don't forget that others ought to be climbing too, and you give them a lift at every opportunity. Not a bad idea, that!"—*Forward.*

Kept from Falling.

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

When we encounter a limping backslider, with his crippled character, we look upon him with pity and with shame; those scars were got in the service of the devil. A face disfigured by a bursting shell is a face to be proud of; a face bloated by the bottle is a face to be ashamed of. I know of many a sturdy Christian whose poverty is a badge of honor; it was the price paid by conscience for integrity. Other church members I wot of who have wasted their substance in wanton extravagance or in wild speculations; their poverty is a punishment and disgrace. Failures are not always falls. There have been numerous failures lately in the circles of business, but no man has really fallen who has saved his character.

The most frequent source of danger is trifling with conscience. This invariably "goes before a fall." No professed Christian can indulge in any practice or take any step which conscience condemns without straining the very fiber of character and without provoking God to let him tumble into the dust. A healthy conscience always keeps a safe margin between the pathway of conduct and the precipice of temptation. The moment that we venture to the dangerous edge in order to grasp some forbidden flower or fruit, the eye grows dizzy and we lose our balance; in that moment we have really no claim on God to keep us from falling—any more than David had when he leaned over the precipice of lust. That many a venturesome Christian who has discovered his danger and cried unto God for help has been rescued we do not doubt; but it is equally true that down at the base of every precipice of temptation lie multitudes of mangled forms.

Christ's sustaining, upholding power is infinite; but it is only secured to us "through faith." If that connection is cut, we are gone; and it is in our power to cut it. The same Peter who had been upheld once from sinking in the waves, afterward detached himself from Christ, and instantly fell. The spirit of boastful presumption, the reckless tampering with sin, and every wilful disobedience of Christ's commandments, forfeit the protection of divine grace. There are paths and practices and pursuits in which the protecting arm of God is no more assured to us than it would be in the rapids of Niagara. How can a church member expect his Master to preserve him from drunkenness while he is tampering with his decanter? How can he expect to be saved from reproach or ruin while he is using trust-funds for his own benefit, or is risking his good name on the gambling table of reckless speculation? How can any of our Christian daughters keep the heart pure while peopling it with unclean images from a licentious literature or an impure stage? So on through the whole category of sin. Grace never suspends law, never nullifies law. The Christian who asks God to keep him from falling must also keep his own heart with all diligence, and keep himself in the love of Christ, and keep a conscience void of offence. When we have done our best and utmost, we have been dependent on the divine help for that very doing. Without the indwelling grace, and without the enfolding arm, not one of us would be safe for a moment; without that, a whole church—even with a Westminster Confession in its hands—might slide away from the sacramental table into apostacy and perdition.

Here in this world none of us are "blameless;" but when the pierced hand has brought us into the presence of His glory, He will "present us faultless." The cleansing blood will then leave us without blemish. Acquitted for the past through Jesus, and perfected for the future! With united breath we shall ascribe all our conquests to the Lamb; and one of the joyful surprises of heaven will be to look back and see how close we often came to dizzy dangers and disgraceful discomfitures, and were only held back by the unseen hand! We shall then adore the grace that kept us from falling ten thousand times over. Paul will wonder at the grace that made such a saint out of such a sinner. John Calvin and John Wesley will join in singing "None but Christ." There will be no discords in that grateful hallelujah-burst of praise, "Now unto Him who kept us from falling, and has presented us without blemish before the presence of His glory, to the only wise God our Saviour be the majesty, the glory, dominion and power, both now and forevermore!"—*New York Evangelist.*

Responsibility Through Light.

It is said that off the coast of New Zealand a sea captain steered his vessel directly toward the light, and, thinking himself safe, fell asleep. His vessel dashed upon the rocks at the very foot of the light-house. The beacon light shining out upon the deep for protection and guidance furnished no help to the slumbering mariner. Indeed, his culpability was greater because of the abuse of the friendly gift. Said one: "It is a terrible thing for rays of Gospel light to guide a man to his doom. The sins of the godly have this aggravation in them, that they sin against clearer illumination than the wicked. They have better eyes to see sin than others, and for them to meddle with it must needs provoke God."

In this connection one cannot but recall the words of the Saviour himself: "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." To disregard this Divine injunction is to make faith, as well as all other Christian graces, an impossibility. The inability to see is in proportion to the previous opportunity of enjoying the light. The failure to "believe in the light" brings a self-imposed judgment upon the disobedient.

How important, also, that we carry forward the thought into the future life, remembering our Lord's words: "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. . . . For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

Weary

In this life, with its toils, sighs, tears, and pains, its form bowed with labor—with such a busy throng you can find, oh, so very many weary ones. Some so careworn that even the bright, beautiful sunshine seems but a mockery; and the fairer the beams are, the heavier upon their hearts the shadows lie. There are among these some that are tired of thinking, some even to whom life is but a burden, which they would willingly lay aside. Others bear the cross patiently for the sake of the crown which they know is preserved for them who labor and faint not; but many grow weary of the pleasures of the world, and long for a cup of water from the river of life—long for the rest that the Saviour promises to those that come unto Him,—"the weary and the heavy laden." With what pleasure we close our eyes in sleep after the fatigues of the day, and think you not that when temptations assail, when friends are few, we shall look with joy

"To that distant heavenly home,
Where a land of untold beauties,
Its glories fade not to our view
As nearer we approach the skies,—
To this we turn our weary eyes.

—*Selected.*

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