

Precious Sympathy of Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, we're studying Octavius Winslow's book, The Precious Things of God.! And we're coming toward the end of that.

And we have another chapter this morning. Now, God is so constituted human beings that we are able to sympathize with one another. So our hearts do go out to David in his time of grief as we are able to weep with those who weep.

And if you've already lost your own mother, you're able to enter into sorrows that David has in a deeper way than others, perhaps.

And if you've lost a mother or a loved one, not knowing whether they were ready to meet their maker or not, you're able to enter even deeper into David's sorrows and sufferings at this time.

You felt something akin to what he is feeling. And David's present situation perhaps even brings back to you something of those feelings that you had at the loss of your mother.

[1 : 14] Well, this enables us to understand something of the sympathizing Jesus. And that's the next precious thing that Winslow is leading us into this morning.

The precious sympathy of Christ. Now, I don't know of any passage in the Bible that uses the word precious to describe the sympathy of Christ.

Most of the chapters, he has gone to a text that speaks of precious Christ, precious trial of faith, precious faith, and so on. But though there's no passage of Scripture that I can think of that uses the word precious to describe the sympathy of Christ, who that knows it would disagree with Winslow in saying that this is indeed one of the precious things of God.

It was so precious to Winslow that he wrote a whole book of 420 pages on the sympathy of Christ. That's what it's called, the sympathy of Christ. I have my father's copy.

And if his yellow highlighter is any indication of the comforts that he found in it and just how precious the sympathy of Christ was to him, then this is indeed a deep, deep well of comfort to the believer.

[2 : 36] We're only going to be able to let our bucket down just for a dip or two this morning and trust that the refreshment we gain from it may drive us further into the treasuring of the precious sympathy of Christ.

Let's begin by turning to Hebrews chapter 2. Hebrews chapter 2. And I want to read verses 14 through 18.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Now, this is a section on the incarnation of our Lord Jesus.

[3 : 57] What is the incarnation? It's when the eternal Son of God became man. Verse 14. And since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.

That means he had a real human body like ours. A body you have prepared me, he says. Not just a phantom body, not just an appearance of a body, but a real body of flesh and blood.

How do we see this in the Gospels? How does the Holy Spirit verify the fact that Jesus' body was real?

What do you see in the Gospels that would show us that, that his body was real? He ate. He ate. He was tired. He suffered bodily pain.

He cried tears out of his eyeballs. Thirst. He thirsted. These bodily functions were his.

[5 : 11] And we see the New Testament giving testimony to that. You remember, he was so weary, he couldn't carry the cross any further. And so Simon had to carry it for him.

And so we see these evidences of his true humanity. But is that all there is to humanity? Just a body? No, we're two-part creatures.

What's the other part of our nature? The soul or the spirit. The heart. All different words that the Bible uses to describe that non-material part of man.

And Jesus, too, had a real human soul like ours. And so that soul or the heart includes the function of the mind as it thinks.

And the affections as they desire. And the will as it chooses and refuses. Jesus had a mind, had affections, had a will. And so his mind being human was capable of growing in knowledge and in wisdom.

[6 : 19] Just like ours. And we read in verse 17, For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way. So not just in body, but in soul as well.

Like us, his brothers. And all of this without losing anything of his divine nature. He ever remained what he always was, God.

But he added to that our humanity. A human body and soul. Two natures, but just one person. And so he's taken our human nature right into heaven.

He's still there as the God-man. And our human nature is there. He's there as our forerunner. Guaranteeing our entrance.

We who are united to him. We, too, will one day be with him in body and soul. Well, that's the what of the incarnation.

[7 : 20] That's what it is. The eternal Son of God became man. Now the why. Why of the incarnation? What for?

Well, to die for us. Verse 14. Since the children have flesh and blood, he, too, shared in their humanity so that by death. By death, you see.

He took our humanity that he might die. That he might destroy the one who holds the power of death, the devil. To free us from Satan's tyranny. Keeping us under the fear of death all of our lives.

Because what does death bring to the sinner? It wafts him right into the presence of a God who's angry and whose eternal wrath then falls upon him. That's the fear of death that Satan was holding us in bondage to.

And Jesus has come that by his death, he might take away the sting of death and destroy the power of the devil. Well, God is an immortal spirit.

[8 : 22] And he cannot die. So if Jesus is to die, he must become a man. That as man, he might die in the place of men. So that's something of the why of his incarnation.

For this reason, verse 17. He had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that. Here's the purpose. That he might make atonement, propitiation for the sins of the people.

By dying as the substitute sacrifice. To bear the full brunt of God's wrath and thereby turn it away from us who deserved it. That's the why of the incarnation.

But it's not the total why, is it? There's more reason for why he became man. And that's not only to die for us, but to intercede for us.

Verse 17 again. In order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God. He became a man in order that he might become a high priest with an amazing mercy and faithfulness in his service to us.

[9 : 30] So the incarnation was to equip the Lord Jesus Christ for his high priestly work for his people. Not only by making the sacrifice of himself for our sins, but to equip him now to intercede for us in a special way.

With special mercies and sympathy. So how did his incarnation make him a merciful high priest? Well, we're not left to guess. As verse 18 says, because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

So because he himself suffered and went through all kinds of trials in this life, he is now able, as high priest upon his throne, to help us who are going through all kinds of trials and temptations.

He is able to help us. He is able to help us because he remembers what it's like to be where you're at, going through what you're going through.

He's never forgotten that 33 years of his life on earth. They are memories that continue with him today. And that human experience has been part of his equipment, his being equipped to be this merciful and faithful high priest that can now pity us in our weakness and need and send us just the help that we need.

[11 : 07] And this not sporadically, but faithfully, 100% consistently. So what the scriptures are saying is that Jesus, 33 years of life on this earth as a real man, with a real body and soul, have laid up a reservoir of experiences on which to draw for his work as our great high priest.

Let me illustrate it this way. Some of you have taught school and you were prepared for it by textbooks and lectures, but also by student teaching, weren't you?

Not role playing with pretend students, but actual time in a classroom with real students, with all their troubles and problems and challenges.

And it is your experience in a real classroom with real students that help prepare you and equip you for the real job of teaching students.

And so did Jesus, 33 years on earth, as a real man facing real human experiences, prepared him for his job of interceding for you now.

[12 : 26] Him in heaven, you here on earth, going through it. He remembers what it's like. Now, one of the things then that his incarnation and time on earth did for him is that it gave him the capacity for a profound experiential sympathy with us.

We're in chapter 4 now of Hebrews, verses 14 to the end of the chapter. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. So, we have a high priest, and he is upon a throne of grace for his people.

We're going to hear more tonight in Zechariah chapter 6 about a priest upon his throne, and how those two offices came into fulfillment in Jesus, our great high priest who is upon his throne, which is to us a throne of grace.

[14:00] And there, on that throne, he is able to sympathize with us. Now, to what is his ability to sympathize with us attributed? Well, it's to his having been tempted in every way, just as we are.

It's that firsthand experience of suffering and temptation that enables him to sympathize with us in this way. And so, this sympathy lies behind his incarnation.

It's part of the reason for it. And is it not amazing that he would stoop this low and go through all that he went through in order that he might sympathize more deeply with us in our trials?

What love! What mercy! We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. You know people who are unable to sympathize?

They're just kind of heartless? Jesus isn't like that. He is able to sympathize with us. The word is *sympatheo*. *Sympatheo*.

[15:05] To feel with. To feel with. To have a fellow feeling along with others. There's a phenomenon called sympathetic resonance in physics that's illustrated in musical instruments.

That if we would have two pianos, side by side, well-tuned pianos, and we would hit the middle C on one piano and hold it down and just let the note resonate.

Well, the same note, the middle C on the other piano, would also, that string would begin to vibrate. And even so loud that you would begin to hear a noise of middle C from the other piano.

That the second piano is affected by the vibrations of the first piano to the point that it responds in sympathetic resonance. Its own string vibrates according to the same string vibrating in the other piano.

Even so, child of God, as you go through trials and temptations and sufferings in this life, there is in the heart of the God-man in heaven a feeling that is akin to your feeling, that is resonating with what you're feeling here on this earth.

[16:26] And that grows out of his 33 years here, going through human experiences, being tempted in every way as we are. Some people would say, well, you know, this talk of sympathy and hurting with another, it's just maybe overemphasized.

It's really not so. You try telling that to someone who has had to sit by the bedside of a suffering loved one and watch them suffer. You try to tell them that their suffering and pain is not real, that it's just imaginary, or it's exaggerated.

No, it's real. They really hurt. Their hearts really hurt, even though the positive pain is the loved ones. But there is this ability in human beings that God has created as such that we can feel in our hearts true pain for the one who is suffering.

And the Lord Jesus sympathizes with his people's suffering and hurts along with us. There's an echo in his heart, a vibration, if we could say that, in his holy heart that corresponds to the feeling in yours, child of God.

Now notice what it is that he said to sympathize with in Hebrews chapter 4. He sympathizes with our what? Our weaknesses, our infirmities, asthenia, weakness, frailty, ailments, diseases, sicknesses, all comprised in this word that's in our translation called weaknesses or infirmities in the King James.

[18:20] And he is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Now turn to Matthew chapter 17 where we find this same word.

I'm sorry, Matthew 8. Matthew 8, 16 and 17. Matthew 8, 16 and 17.

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah.

He took up our infirmities. There's our word, asthenia. Our infirmities, our weaknesses, our ailments, our diseases, our sicknesses.

He's quoting Isaiah 53, verse 4. He took up our infirmities and he carried our diseases. Now it was as a real man that he took our infirmities and bore our diseases.

[19 : 26] Winslow has us consider three points under this text. First of all, the weaknesses that pertain to our fallen humanity. What are these weaknesses?

Then, our Lord's personal participation in those weaknesses. And lastly, the preciousness of his sympathy with us in those weaknesses. I'm going to cover the last two together.

Both the Lord's going through those same weaknesses with us and his ability to sympathize with us. But we begin with, what are these weaknesses then of our fallen humanity?

That he's able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. That he took up these weaknesses, these infirmities. Well, there's different ways that he bore our infirmities. Different ways that he took them up.

But in the first place, we're going to ask, what are these weaknesses that our great high priest sympathizes with? They're the weaknesses resulting from our fallen condition. They're the weaknesses resulting from the fact that we sinned against God and we're reaping that curse upon us.

[20 : 36] Such that our whole being suffers with weaknesses, imperfections, decay, infirmities that we cannot hide. So the curse for sin has elements and consequences that are embedded within our very makeup.

Well, what are these weaknesses? Well, first of all, weaknesses in our physical body and this we're most familiar with. The sicknesses, diseases, deficiencies, imperfections, organs and limbs, and joints not working correctly, chronic pain, lack of sleep, death and decay at work in the body.

And that will eventually bring us to the grave. This is part of our weakness. Life in a body after the fall. But again, it's not just in our physical body.

There's weaknesses in our soul. Now, these are going, we saw that Jesus was tempted in every way like us and yet without sin. Jesus did not have a fallen soul in the way that we have a fallen soul.

So he's going to bear our weaknesses of soul in a different way than he bears some of these other weaknesses. But what are the weaknesses of our soul, of our heart, our mind, our affections, our will?

[21 : 52] Well, according to Winslow, the greatest of them all, and I don't think any of us would argue with him, is indwelling sin. Or what he calls the in-being of sin.

The fact that sin is a living principle in our soul. And it's an active thing. And it's our greatest weakness. It's the parent of all other infirmities that we have.

It's the root of all evils. It's the source of so much of our trouble, sorrow and suffering in life on a daily basis. This living principle of sin from which all of our sin originates.

All outbreaks of sinful behavior, words, acts, attitudes, deeds, come from this, the enemy within. And that follows us right into the church this morning.

It's still there. I worship with weakness today. You do too. We worship with the weakness of sin dwelling in us. That's why we must guard our hearts with all diligence.

[22:54] And because of sin dwelling in us, when I would do good, Paul says, I find evil present there with me and always suggesting something evil, pulling me back, holding me back from the good that I would do.

You see, this is my greatest weakness. And, no wonder the apostle Paul cried out, oh, wretched man that I am. Because I've got this thing called sin, indwelling sin within me.

And Winslow says, when this grips us, we will no longer be satisfied with the moral filtration of the impure streams, but we'll labor to purify the fountain. And we'll cry out to God, cleanse my heart.

Cleanse my heart from every evil thought. We'll guard the heart. Well, this is part of our weakness. As fallen human beings, we not only have weaknesses in our bodies, but we have weaknesses in our soul, the greatest of which is sin.

And then, thirdly, Winslow mentions constitutional weaknesses. He says, each person has a spiritual and mental constitution, natural to himself, that varies as widely as our faces.

[24:12] So, you have this constitutional makeup. I believe he's referring to our temperaments, what we call personality sometimes. Some by nature are impulsive, like Peter.

Excitable, impetuous, strong-minded, stubborn, fiery emotions. Others are cold and calculating. Matter of fact, little feeling.

Takes a lot to stir them up. Others are gloomy and despondent, easily depressed and fearful. They're pessimistic. They always see the glass is half empty.

They focus on this, you see. And that's what they see in life, all the problems in life. Others are more, have an optimistic temperament. And they say, oh, the glass is half full. Look at this.

Look at that. Well, we're born with a basic disposition. And it may be further developed by nurture and upbringing.

[25:14] But all of this speaks of this temperament that we have, this personality that we have. Each one of us as distinct and unique as the nose on our face.

And what Winslow is saying is that each temperament has not only strengths, but also inherent weaknesses due to the fall. Our temperaments, too, have been affected by sin and the fall.

So we can be too emotional to where we're controlled by our emotions. Or we can be too emotionally dead, where we're unfeeling towards suffering and unmoved.

We can be too trusting and easily deceived, but we can also be too suspicious. We can only see the negative side of things, or we can only see the positive side of things.

But neither one of those are right. We need to see life as it really is, with both. We can be too serious and somber, or too joyful and frothy. Not serious enough.

[26:17] We can be easily depressed and despondent. We can be too full of self-doubt, always criticizing ourselves, examining ourselves, condemning ourselves. But we can also be too self-assured, never examining ourselves, trusting too confidently in self.

We can be too carefree. We can be too concerned. You see, all of our temperaments have propensities toward evil, toward sin.

And what Winslow is saying is that these weaknesses of our temperaments cling to us like the skin on our bodies. You don't get outside of it, and they're the cause of many troubles in the believer's life.

Well, these are just three of the weaknesses that he lists that pertains to our fallen humanity. We now come to our Lord's personal participation in the weakness of his people and his ability to pity us and sympathize with us.

We just saw that when he was on the earth, he healed people's weaknesses and diseases, and in that way showed his sympathy and pity with them.

[27 : 28] He took up our infirmities, our weaknesses. He carried our diseases. So we're going to look as Winslow unpacks this a bit.

In what way did Jesus take our infirmities and carry our diseases? Well, first of all, by becoming a man for us. And that's what we saw. He took our humanity, a real body.

And we saw that that body and a real soul, and though that body is sinless, he did share in a body and a soul that had weakness.

And we just talked about that. A body and a soul that had infirmities. We see him suffering pain. We see him suffering weakness. We see him suffering hunger, suffering thirst.

We see him suffering on the cross. We see him dying. These are the things that have come upon our humanity because of sin. So though he had no sin himself, he did take upon him a humanity that felt and experienced these weaknesses of a fallen humanity.

[28 : 40] And in that way, he bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows. But someone says, well, how did he do that since he didn't have diseases? I mean, he wasn't blind.

He wasn't deaf. He wasn't lame. We know that from the scriptures. In what way did he carry our diseases? And here, Winslow says, in the second place, not only by becoming man for us does he bear our weakness and infirmity, but secondly, by becoming sin for us and becoming a curse for us.

And this is how he reasons. Sin is the source of all our infirmities. Follow them all back to the source, and it's sin. And Jesus didn't remain aloof from us and our sins, but he identified so closely with us that he took upon himself our sins.

The Father laid the iniquities of us all upon him, and he had them placed upon him, and he himself bore our sins in his body to the tree, where he was then wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed.

He bore our sicknesses when he bore our sins. It was by taking our sins upon himself that he took our infirmities and carried all our diseases.

[30 : 08] Winslow says it this way, if he bore the cause of all of our infirmities, surely he's fitted to sympathize with its effects, which is all of our weakness and disease and sin.

He says, We little know of Christ's perfect ability to sympathize with us in our sickness and diseases. At our bedsides, he comes and reveals himself to us.

He comes and comforts and encourages us, working in us patience, endurance, submission to God's will, giving songs in the night, thankfulness, peace, and joy.

In doing so, is he not bearing our sicknesses? Sick believer, you are not alone. Christ is with you, well aware of all your weakness, infirmity, and pain.

He understands the delicate relation between body and soul, that when you're sick in body, it affects your spirit. You find it hard to pray, hard to meditate, hard perhaps even to read the Bible, difficult to concentrate.

[31 : 10] He knows. He pities you because of that. He knows the heaviness of spirit, the loss of joys, the worries, and the fears that press in upon us when we're physically suffering.

And in all of this, he pities you. His heart runs out to you in compassion and mercy. Your sympathizing Jesus draws near to comfort and help you and to give you his strength in your weakness such that with the Apostle Paul, you can actually come to glory and rejoice in your weaknesses so that his power might rest upon you.

That's the sympathizing Jesus and what he brings to us, the help he gives us, the grace and mercy that we find from his sympathetic, high priestly work.

It's not a casual interest that he has in us. It's perfect sympathy. Why is it that we don't feel more sympathy for suffering people?

What's possibly a reason that we don't feel this sympathy towards people who are suffering? What could be the reason? Self-centeredness. We're so concerned and consumed with ourselves that we really don't even recognize people's suffering.

[32 : 28] What else? Ignorance. Ignorance. We might not even know what they're going through even if we acknowledge, okay, they've got this problem, okay, and we're back on, but we don't really understand.

We could do well to live a day in their shoes, as we say, that we might gain an awareness of what does this problem mean to them. So we have selfishness, we have ignorance, these things have a terrible effect upon our sympathy, but I want you to know that Jesus has none of those.

Who is more selfless than Jesus Christ? Who is more putting the needs of others above himself than what we see in Jesus in Philippians chapter 2?

And as to ignorance of what we're going through? No. No. He understands. No one understands like Jesus. He's been here.

He has borne our sorrows. He's carried our diseases. He has perfect understanding, perfect selfless concern in us, and that equals, you add those two up, and that equals perfect sympathy.

[33 : 40] It's with intense interest that he cares for his children. And so Jesus knew what it was on earth to be weary, hungry, thirsty, homeless, friendless, maligned, slandered, wounded by foes, deserted by friends, mocked by men, tempted by Satan, and forsaken by God.

Now you put your experience alongside of that. He's been there. Was this not taking upon himself our weaknesses? What's your weakness?

What's your sin? Jesus bore it. Sickness? Jesus carried it. Weakness of body? Jesus assumed it. Loneliness?

Jesus lived it. Irritability? Impatience? Worry? Nervousness? Jesus bore that sin and the curse that are the cause of each of these.

Wounded love? Betrayed confidence? Disappointed friendship? Jesus trod this path before you. Betrayed by one disciple? Denied by another? And forsaken by all?

[34 : 47] Poverty? Poor circumstances? Jesus too was poor with no place to lay his head dependent upon the charity of others. Bereaved? He suffered the loss of his father.

And notice how he weeps at his friend Lazarus' tomb. Tempted to sin? He too, in every way, yet without sin. Troubled and overwhelmed? He too was deeply distressed and troubled.

He felt mental darkness. Overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Winslow says, Tell me if you ever had an infirmity which your Lord did not bear before you in one way or another.

He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases. So how precious is the sympathy of Christ with human infirmity and weakness?

And what Jesus was then when he lived through these on earth, he is now. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. The man of sorrows acquainted with grief, that's him.

[35 : 50] He's able, therefore, to sympathize with all your weaknesses. He knows the weight and curse and sorrow of sin for he bore them to Calvary. Listen to this from Winslow.

Child of God, what more shall Christ endure? What ruder path shall he tread? What deeper sorrow shall he experience? What bitterer cup shall he drink? What darker cloud shall he penetrate?

What infirmities more human, more severe, more humiliating shall he take? All in order to be touched with the feeling of yours. Christ's sympathy entwines around your every weakness, bodily, mental, spiritual, temperamental, and he makes it all his own.

He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. It's impossible for the head not to feel what's going on in his body on earth. Our union with him ensures his sympathy for us.

I close with two applications. Number one, pray. Because that's the application of Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 6. Therefore, let us come with confidence boldly to this high priest, this throne of grace, because we know that this one is able to sympathize with us.

[37 : 11] And he has just the mercy for our sin, just the grace for our weakness that we need. So pray. Even though in our problems we may have a greater reluctance to pray, in our sickness it's harder to pray, that's still the message.

Pray. Get to this sympathizing Jesus and receive from him all that he gives from his sympathy. And secondly, show that same sympathy towards your fellow Christian in all their weakness.

Isn't that good? Now the shoe's getting tighter and that's where Winslow comes. If Christ patiently bears and tenderly sympathizes with your infirmities, then you be as patient and sympathizing toward the infirmities of your fellow Christians.

Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Every one of our brethren have their own unique weaknesses. Learn to be like Christ, gentle, patient, charitable, and sympathizing.

Rejoice with those that rejoice. Weep with those that weep. And so the body of Christ, we're told, has this sympathy within it so that if one part suffers, every part suffers with it.

[38 : 31] If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. There's this sympathy in the body of Christ that responds to the sorrows and joys of each other.

And that demonstrates that we belong to the body of Christ, that we have this sympathy and love for one another such that we cannot but be touched by the feelings of their weakness.

So speak gently or rather speak not in all of a brother's failing. Unveil not a sister's weakness to another eye. Act toward that weak or erring one as though that weakness and error were your own.

And then Winslow puts up a cry to this sympathetic high priest as his closing word. Lamb of God, mold us to your truth and make us like yourself.

Let's look in all of our troubles then to this sympathizing Jesus. let's zoom in on this reality and all that pains us to know that there's one a real man at God the Father's side.

[39 : 49] It's not any vain imagination. He's a real man and he has a real feeling in his human heart with yours. How does he do that?

He's got so many children, so many people and yet he enters so intimately into the life of each one of his people in their hearts. Well, let's pray and thank him, shall we?

When we consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, our Father, when we consider the stars and the moon which you have set in place, Lord Jesus, what is man that you even send one thought toward us, much less that you care for us, that you sympathize with us, humble us with such an awesome reality to know that we have never felt anything in our hearts but that we have one in heaven that pities us.

Yes, he hates our sin but he pities us for the fact that we still have a sinful remaining principle of sin within. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your pity.

Thank you for your help. Thank you for your mercy and your grace to us. Meet us then. I pray for those who are severely tried that you would pour out upon them an awareness of your sympathy with them and they might taste and drink deeply of the sympathy of Christ and so find the joy and the peace that comes from believing.

[41 : 27] Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being our sympathetic high priest. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.