

## THE GREAT EMPATHIZER

***“For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but has been tested in all ways, in similarity [to us], without sin”*** (Hebrews 4:15) (Author’s. translation).

It is one thing to have a mediator—a link between ourselves and God. (The ancient Gnostics claimed twelve links, or emanations, with Jesus as the twelfth). It is quite another thing for that mediator to be integrally identified with those whom He represents. Nor would it even be possible for deity and humanity to be so integrated apart from the miraculous intervention of the Master of the Universe. (By analogy, could a human, for example, be integrated with an ant even if the human might have complete mastery over the destiny of the ant, to preserve or destroy it)?

In Jesus we have a Mediator who not only gave His life as a sacrifice for us, but lived on the earth as a human person, subject to human limitations and frustrations, and thus able to understand and share our human feelings. In this respect His death was not merely a moment of crucifixion, but a lifetime of humiliation in His self-imposed cloak of human personality.

### **We Do Not Have a Priest Who Cannot Empathize.**

The expression in the King James—“touched with the feeling” is the translation of one word in the original Greek text—*sumpathesai*—from which we obviously get our word, “sympathy.” But the English word, “sympathy,” in its common usage, often refers to a reaching out in caring, by those who may or may not really share a common experience with the object of caring. The Greek word carries with it a “togetherness” in feeling, that belongs to those who have been through a similar experience. The word appears in Romans 8:17 in a glorious trilogy of togetherness—*“heirs together, sufferers together, glorified together”* All of these expressions contain the prefix sun or sum. Actually the concept is best expressed in English by the word “empathy,” which suggests the sharing of a common experience. *“Let this mind be you which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery [a thing to grasp] to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation [emptied Himself], and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:5-8). For Jesus, the cross was a moment of agony but His humanity was a lifetime of humiliation. All the pains and sorrows and passions of us humans were experienced by Christ.

### **Tested in All Ways in Similarity to Us**

Could the Son of God, possessing the inner nature of Deity, ever have sinned? And if He could never have sinned, how could He know the meaning of temptation? The Greek word translated “tempted,” is *peiradzo*, which has to do with testing of any kind. In our English vernacular, temptation carries with it an *onus* of evil, or indiscretion. The Greek word implies the testing of values and priorities. Jesus’ so-called “temptation in the wilderness” had not to do with immorality, but with purposes and priorities. Of course, any succumbing to the suggestions of the Tempter, would have made Him the subject of Satan. But, on the surface, He was presented with options that would have speeded His

mission—stones into bread would solve the world's hunger, miraculous deliverance would demonstrate the power of God; dominion over the world would put him in charge over human destiny. Of course, the price was submission to Satan, but the essence of the test was a potential shortcut to the achievement of goals, and not a personal indulgence of the flesh either in pride or immorality.

### **Yet Without Sin**

But, if Jesus could not, as the Son of God, have sinned, where was the test? A good analogy is in the launching of a ship. The vessel has been made by the finest craftsmen. It is constructed to withstand the raging of the sea. It is christened; the hawsers are severed; it slides into the water and rides in perfect balance. It is committed confidently to the tides; it will ride out the storms. But if it will not sink, will it not feel the crashing of the stormy seas against its hull? Indeed it will. The vessel will creak and groan; the waves will crash over its deck; the canvas may be tattered by the gales; but it will not sink. Jesus felt what we feel; knew frustration and desolation. But He did not sin. He knows the force of the enemy; the pounding of the waves and blasts of the gale. At the same time, He knows our human weakness—born into the devastating processes of a Satanic world. He came not to judge us, but to save us. John said it, "*God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*" (John 3:17). He knows the forces we face and empathizes with us. Matthew records a touching scene as Jesus encountered the masses—"*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad [beat down and pursued] as sheep having no shepherd*" (Matthew 9:36).

But how do I know He is still with me in spite of my failures? How do I know He wants me to come to Him? You know because you want to come. If His Spirit were not with you, you would not want to come.

**BRING TO CHRIST YOUR EVERY SORROW AND SIN, FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE. HE IS THE GREAT EMPATHIZER.**

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