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La D 389 preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday evening 6.12.70.

Hymns 120, 237, 675
Reading Isaiah 53 and 54
Text Hebrews 4.14-16

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 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. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

It would be a wonderful evening if we should be favoured to feel that witness in our hearts so that we could say of the sufferings of a dear Redeemer, "this we know, it was all for us". There may be some for whom it is who do not feel they could lay claim to such an assurance, but who may have to say O that I could feel it was all for me! Where this is the case may the Lord be pleased to grant it, so that you can walk up and down these verses and feel an experimental interest in the sacred, blessed truth that is here concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in His office as a great high Priest. Words must be poor when we attempt to speak upon such a subject as this, but after all the life blood of the Gospel centres in the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus. There has never been a priest like Him and there never will be. We may read about the high priests and the priests in the Old Testament but none can compare with Him. He has no comparison, the main point here consists in the fact that He is able to save to the uttermost poor lost people, not through what somebody else has done for Him, but what He Himself has accomplished.

In this office are three things that might be mentioned that are necessary and are involved in the Priesthood of Christ. One point consists in taking our nature upon Him, without which He could not be a priest; another, the sacrifice that He offered without which He could not take away sin; and the third the position that He occupies as having passed into the heavens where He exercises that blessed office and disposes the blessings of grace to His poor, needy people upon the earth. There He is, our great High Priest. He is great here particularly in His sympathy, but He is great in a number of different ways, He is great in His love. "Greater

love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends"; but our blessed High Priest did, and that for some of you. I hope it may be His blessed will that it proves to be for everyone, even as we have been singing.

He is great in His knowledge, wisdom and understanding, nothing is concealed from His penetrating eye. There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. He is our great High Priest. This comes into our lives. Do we feel to need wisdom? Then this great High Priest is made this unto us for He of God is made unto us wisdom. Do you need a righteousness? It must come from this Priest. Do you need strength? It must come from Him, as a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

"Every grace and every favour

Comes to us through Jesus blood"

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens". This is a blessed proof of His divine personality, as was His resurrection from the dead. When the work of redemption was completed He ascended up from this earth to heaven. We read that His disciples saw Him go up until He vanished out of their sight; He ascended up and passed into the heaven: I do not know how you may feel about this, but I know it has been a consoling thought in my heart many and many a time that we have a Priest in heaven, a living Jesus, made a priest mediatorially after the order of Melchisedec, and His life now as a Priest is an evidence and demonstration of the satisfaction and acceptance of His sacrifice, and all His dear people stand perfect in Him. All their sins are washed away for ever and they are justified by His obedience unto death. O what a glorious Person He is. I am sure I may repeat what I said this morning; as you may be helped keep your eye fixed on Him when you pray, also, when you read keep that eye fixed on Him for that is where your blessing must come from.

9 He is a great High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, therefore, "let us hold fast our profession". This will present many difficulties because of the opposition that necessarily attends this holding fast our profession. There is the power of

unbelief within us, temptations without, cross providences, hard things, afflictions, losses, a path of tribulation, darkness, fears, apprehensions, many, many things will make it a difficult matter, but, as I believe I mentioned this morning, it is a profession of faith in Christ, for that is where the soul anchors, it is a profession of faith and confidence in His precious blood to purge our load of guilt away. It is a profession of the perfection of His righteousness to present us without spot before God one day.

The secret of this holding fast is union with Him; "I in them". The Vine and the branches indicate this; when the branches are in union with the vine then it lives and is fruitful. So does a living soul that is in union with Christ. There is no continuing without this, no holding fast in a gracious saving way if there is no union. This holding fast is looking to Him, trusting in Him, casting our care upon Him, committing our way to Him, leaning upon Him, holding fast with a "Lord help me". "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." O what a wonder it will be to come through, to be brought through, to overcome at last, to be victorious. We need grace to keep our eyes fixed on Him in spite of all opposition, "Let not all this terrify, pursue the narrow path". Press on, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Press toward the mark.

The point I would like to speak on for a little while is just this matter of the priesthood of Christ in His compassion and sympathy. It is said by the Apostle here that "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities". By infirmities you know we may understand some kind of weakness or disability or affliction. Indeed it may apply to any trial that we may have to walk in, in which we may feel we have not strength of ourselves to do so. He is touched with our infirmities, the feeling of our infirmities. They can be infirmities of the body, in some particular limb, or an infirmity in relation to the hearing or the sight, as we read of one who had an infirmity for so many years who was waiting at the pool. We read of what the Lord said to the ministers of John, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are

raised". All these are infirmities. We may term them afflictions, I know, but they are infirmities in the sense that they indicate some particular weakness. As a deaf person is not able to hear because of that infirmity, so a dumb person is not able to speak because of this infirmity. There are many infirmities, and sometimes these can be for the time being through taking a mistaken view of things. This was the case with Asaph, he came to mistaken, premature conclusions. This can be an infirmity. Good Asaph said, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?". "Will He be favourable no more?". This was an infirmity, a mistaken conclusion, he said so. He said "This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High".

Now dear friends we are all subject to these infirmities. Do you not feel it? Sometimes this can refer to the matter of prayer. We have an infirmity in this matter. What is this? The Apostle to/ refers it in the Romans, "The spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought". Here is an infirmity. This may seem difficult to understand, but we may not always know what is best for us or what the will of the Lord is concerning us. We can be very much in the dark, and may pray for things that nature desires without real subjection to the Lord's will. Here is an infirmity, but "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered". How does the Spirit help these infirmities? By strengthening us, holding up our hands in prayer and imparting that importunity so that we feel able to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace in the boldness of a living faith. This is how the Spirit helps our infirmities. He may also do this by presenting Christ before our view as all-sufficient to supply every need, and thereby urge us to earnest pleading by the Spirit of grace and of supplication.

Here are these infirmities, then. Now the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has no infirmities that are consequent upon inherent weakness and sin. We know all afflictions and death itself result from sin, from the fall of man. The dear Redeemer has no infirmities inherent in Himself, but He understands the infirmities

of His poor dear people because of what He has passed through Himself. Whatever infirmity you may labour under He can understand it sympathetically. Are you suffering pain? He can understand that pain because He suffered such pain, as He did when He suffered that cruel death. Are you insulted, persecuted, opposed? So was He. He was insulted, persecuted, opposed and hated. He cannot understand your trials and afflictions in this way. Oh say you, but I am tempted by the devil - so was He. As you know, He was tempted in the wilderness. Say you, I am tempted to unbelief and distrust of God; so was He by Satan, tempted to a distrust of God's providence; for when He was hungry He was tempted to turn stones to bread. That was a temptation from Satan. When you feel to be assailed by Satan you may remember that so was your Saviour assailed by Satan. Oh, say you, I am tempted to pride and presumption - so was He. Are you tempted to idolatry? - so was He.

The point then is that whatever your temptations are this great High Priest can understand them. But there is something more than this, more than understanding them. This is that He is touched by them. He is touched by the feeling of your infirmities. This can be very, very sweet. This being touched with the feeling of our infirmities appears to be first that He walks with us in them. As it is in the prophecy by Isaiah, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee". You are afflicted by these infirmities, but He walks with you in them, He is touched by the feeling of your infirmities, and not only so but He supports you under them, He does not leave you to shift for yourself, He supports you in them. He bears you through them, He supports you with His staff and rod, He does not leave you to fight your battles alone, He is the captain of your salvation made perfect through sufferings. Some of you may understand me; you may have felt a particular sense of the Lord's presence with you in a furnace of trial, supporting you with a promise, holding you up, walking with you in the trial, carrying the burden for you, bearing you through it. So it has been a sanctified trial, because the Lord was with you in it, and blessed His word to you when you were passing through the waters.

He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, He may touch your heart with His love, melt you in repentance and contrition for sin, bring you near to Himself, carry you as a lamb in His bosom through the rough and rugged track that you may have to travel along in this path of tribulation. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. We are poor sinful mortals. We are liable to fall a prey to temptation. He was tempted in all points, yet He was perfectly holy. Although He was tempted He was never tainted, although He suffered being tempted, He never fell by any temptation, Oh no, He knows just how to take you up in His arms and carry you through as though He would whisper in your heart, I have suffered all for you. He will take you up in His arms so to speak and carry you through a furnace or bear you through a river, help you, bring you through and give you to feel a sweet peace and quietness in it. This is being touched with the feeling of your infirmities.

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

This is an incentive in the mind of the Apostle to come boldly unto the Throne of grace, as though he would say, You have these infirmities. How can you carry them, how can you walk in them, how can you endure them? Here is a direction, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace" with your infirmities, your weakness, your temptation, your sins, your fears, your failings. This boldness is the boldness of faith. Faith is what I may term a confidence, not a presumptuous boldness. It is described in one of the Psalms, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it". Ask for great things, "large petitions with thee bring". "Open thy mouth wide". This is a confidence then - Why go to this throne of grace? Because we have nowhere else to go. It is the only avenue of soul relief, of deliverance. Let us come boldly. You may say, my case is too bad. Who said that? The Lord never said so. We need to be careful about listening to what the devil says. The Apostle James says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". How can we poor things resist the devil? I would say the best way is to come boldly

to the throne of grace, for that is what the devil cannot abide. The weakest saint upon his knees can gain the victory.

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees"

This is the best way of resisting him.

What various matters there are, your soul, your body, your providences, your circumstances and many things. This is an open door, "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." That is the reason why we are exhorted to venture with this boldness. First of all that we may obtain mercy. What is it that we need mercy for? Mercy in forgiveness, grace to strengthen. When it comes to the matter of mercy this is a great thing, for this forgiveness is an act of mercy, this can take us to Psalm 51 where the Psalmist says, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions", and so on down through the Psalm. If the Lord should be pleased to bring that forgiveness into your heart and give you to feel it, He will only do it as an act of mercy toward you or me or anyone else, not because we have any claim upon Him. It must be an act of mercy; in fact it is mercy all the way. "Have mercy upon me, O God". This is what the Lord Jesus is exalted to give. He is "A Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins". Oh what blessed peace He gives, what joy, what life, what liberty, what assurance! All is an act of mercy. In this blessed word we have those promises that He will do this: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ." He is faithful because He has promised, and just because He has given satisfaction, so that the pardon of sin does not clash with the holy character of God.

It is an amazing wonder that we may obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need. It is always a time of need; but there are particular times of need, when that need is so particularly felt that you come to the place of one of whom we read that she said, "Lord help me". "Grace to help in time of need". This can be when we are under some infirmity, pressing hard upon us, some

particular affliction, some trial, some hard thing that you may have to walk in that is like water wearing the stones, these things bring us down so that we feel to have no strength left except it be to pray, "Lord help me". Then this grace is given, "grace to help in time of need". Venture boldly to the throne of grace that you may find grace, obtain it, feel it, experience it. It is a confirming word. It is what so many of the Lord's people have felt in a time of trouble, sorrow, affliction, when life has been in jeopardy, heavy outward trials that have been very hard to bear, but not too hard for the Lord to give you strength to hold you up and bring you through.

The Lord said to the Apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In this way you may find and feel your shoes to be as iron and brass; you can walk in them and they will be sure to fit. You have to bring these infirmities to a mercy seat that you may find grace to help in time of need. They are sure to come, they have come, they do come; and what a mercy it is when a waiting soul finds the Lord in a time of need, and feels that inward support, that divine sympathy, this is when this great High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. I hope I have been helped to say a few things that are according to the Gospel and according to the experience of the Lord's people. May we be favoured to prove that we have such an High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and that a throne of grace is open for us to venture to, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Amen.