His Strength is Perfect
Hebrews 2:14-18
Dr. Paul Cannings

A.Our Deliverer (vs. 14-15):

1. Since the children share in the flesh and blood – Because Christ took on human flesh, representing the first Adam (Romans 5:12), we had something in common with Him.
2. He likewise also partook of the same – Christ, for the time He was on earth was completely who we are in the flesh (Luke 2:52) from birth to adulthood. Christ also identified with us by taking on all the trials that Satan offers (Luke 4:13; Hebrews 4:15) so that He can sympathize with our weaknesses become a merciful high priest (2:17; 3:1).
3. Partook – Satan has nothing on us because Christ took on everything.

    a) *Lev*. 17:11 – *The life of a creature is in the blood* – See note on Gen. 9:4. The bloodshed in the sacrifices was sacred. It epitomized the sacrificial victim's life. Since life was sacred, blood (a symbol of life) had to be treated with respect (Gen. 9:5-6). Eating blood was therefore strictly forbidden (Lev. 7:26-27; Dt. 12:16,23-25; 15:23; 1 Sam. 14:32-34). (NASU)

4. Through death - Satan's ultimate attack was for humankind to be eternally dead, meaning we would have been permanently separate from God forever. Christ was physically and spiritually (1 Peter 3:18-22) separated from God for three days and three nights, but then conquered death permanently, overcoming Satan's stamp on humankind.

    a) Satan has acquired over man (by God's law, Ge 2:17; Ro 6:23) the power of death by man's sin, death being the executioner of sin, and man being Satan's "*lawful* captive." Jesus, by dying, has made the dying His own (Ro 14:9), and has taken the prey from the mighty. Death's power was manifest; he who wielded that power, lurking beneath it, is here expressed, namely, Satan. Wisdom 2:24, "By the envy of the devil, death entered into the world."[1]

5. Render powerless him who had power of death - Christ abolished Satan's ability, making it inactive so that he has no supremacy over humanity to separate him from God permanently. Satan cannot even attempt, when we pass away, to remove us from "being absent from the body and present with the Lord," (2 Cor. 5:8) "in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:52)

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[1] Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Heb 2:14). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

a) The word "destroy" is the translation of *katergazomai* (κατεργαζομαι), which means "to bring to naught, to render inoperative." Satan was not annihilated at the Cross. His power was broken. Spiritual death cannot hold the person who puts his faith in the Saviour. Physical death cannot keep his body in the grave. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus provides the believer with eternal life, and his body with glorification at the Rapture. Thus, Jesus conquered death, and brought to naught the Devil. Satan had the power of death, not in the sense that he had power over death, but that he had the sovereignty or dominion of death. He had a sovereignty of which death is the realm. The word for "power" in the Greek text here is *kratos* (κρατος), which means "power in the sense of dominion." His dominion over the human race was in the form of death. That dominion is now broken.[2]

b) *"But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 " O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 15:54-58; NASU)

6. <u>Who had power over death</u> – Power of death was clearly in his hands in the case of Job (Job 1:12), and he is over the world, where there is much death (1 John 5:19).

   a) The devil tempts people to sin and then accuses them of rebelling against God (Gen. 3; Job 1). By inducing them to sin, Satan delivers people over to death, the due penalty for their sin (Rom. 5:12). The devil is still active today (1 Pet. 5:8), but his power over death has been taken away from him. Christ's death fulfilled the penalty for sin. Thus, by placing our trust in Christ, we can be free from Satan's evil grasp (Luke 10:18; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 1:18). The judgment of Satan was rendered by the Cross, but the execution lies in the future (1 Cor. 15:54–57; Rev. 20:10).

7. <u>That is, the devil</u> – The writer of Hebrews is careful to say the devil, meaning a person who falsely accuses believers (Rev. 12:9, 10; he is a liar by his very nature; John 8:44), without any reason (Job), seeks to create division, as can be seen in the case of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:7-8, and 2 Tim. 2:23-26), even leading to murder.

   a) In what sense did Satan have the power of death? The final authority of death is in the hands of our God (Deut. 32:39; Matt. 10:28; Rev. 1:18). Satan can do only that which is permitted by God (Job 1:12; 2:6). But because Satan is the author of sin (John 8:44), and sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), in this sense Satan exercises power in the realm of death. Jesus called him a murderer (John 8:44). Satan uses the fear of

[2] Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Heb 2:14). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

death as a terrible weapon to gain control over the lives of people. His kingdom is one of darkness and death (Col. 1:13). We who trust in Jesus Christ have once and for all been delivered from Satan's authority and from the terrible fear of death. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ have given us victory! (1 Cor. 15:55–58)[3]

8. Might free those who through fear of death – When Christ made the devil, all by Himself, powerless over death, He at that very moment released those whose everyday lives are tormented by their past. They are in terror that their past lives would remove them from the presence of God.
9. Subject to slavery – The feeling of being guilty of sinning dominated them so that they were in bondage to it, consumed each day with seeking forgiveness by sacrificing a lot of animals through their earthly high priest. This was the major focus of their lives every day. We were once in bondage to the devil, unable to fulfill the conditions of the Mosaic Law (Romans 3:20).
10. All their lives - Each day these believers attempt to live by the Mosaic Laws which keeps them in bondage (Hebrews 3:7-11; 6:4; 9:6-14; 10:14-18), rather than living in the power of the Holy Spirit, who empowers them to live in freedom from sin when they commit to being guided by the true Word of God (John 8:31-32). By seeking to establish righteousness through religiously observing the Law, they expose their sin rather than overcome it (Rom. 3:20) True freedom comes through faith in God and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, for without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

B. Merciful and Faithful High Priest (Vs. 16-17):

1. For assuredly He does not give help to angels – With absolute certainty, God does not continuously provide privileges to angels compared to what He does for us (Hebrews 1:14).

   a) Jesus did not come to save angels (note Heb. 2:16); He came to save humans. This meant that He had to take on Himself flesh and blood and become a Man. Only then could He die and through His death defeat Satan. The word "destroy" does not mean "annihilate," for it is obvious that Satan is still alive and busy. The word means "render inoperative, make of none effect." Satan is not destroyed, but he is disarmed.[4]

2. Gives help to the descendants of Abraham – Christ defeated the devil and has all power and can therefore provide help to any believer in need at any time (Hebrews 12:1-3).
3. Gives help to the descendants of Abraham – Christ continuously sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).

[3] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 284). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
[4] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 284). Victor Books.

4. Gives help – Christ is our high priest who continuously makes intercession for us (Hebrews 8:1-2).

    a) In all things includes Jesus' humanity (v. 14) and His suffering (v. 18). Jesus participated in our nature and in our sufferings on earth so that He could be a sympathetic Mediator between God and humanity. He understands our weaknesses and intercedes for us in the presence of God the Father. He is a merciful (sympathetic) and faithful (trustworthy) High Priest. This is the first time the title High Priest occurs in Hebrews, and the first time the title is applied to Jesus Christ in the Bible. [5]

5. Gives help – Christ provides faith that He rewards (Hebrews 11:6).
6. Gives help – Christ provides us with a cloud of witnesses through whom we can find encouragement to endure our trials (Hebrews 12:1-3).
7. Gives help – He provides us His Word that is our victory (Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:3-4).
8. He had to be made like his brethren in ALL THINGS – God obligated Himself to establish an exact resemblance of Christ to those who had the same spiritual Father, committed to the same Christian community of believers who love one another.

    a) While He was here on earth, Jesus was "made like unto His brethren" in that He experienced the sinless infirmities of human nature. He knew what it was to be a helpless baby, a growing child, a maturing adolescent. He knew the experiences of weariness, hunger, and thirst (John 4:6–8). He knew what it was to be despised and rejected, to be lied about and falsely accused. He experienced physical suffering and death. All of this was a part of His "training" for His heavenly ministry as High Priest.[6]

9. Might become a merciful high priest – God originated into existence as a compassionate (seen by the numerous miracles of healing and raising people from the dead) high priest. God provides salvation because "God so loved the world." (Jn. 3:16). Christ's purposes on earth was to become our Savior and mediator (4:15-16; 5:5-10).

    a) To men Christ is compassionate and to God he is faithful. Indeed, mercy and truth have met together in him. His faithfulness is shown in his being steadfast under the temptation which was a part of his suffering. Now he is able to come to the aid of all who are tempted because he has passed through the same tests and emerged victorious, and as Man he knows our need. Propitiation for our sins. See I Jn 2:2; 4:10; Rom 3:25; and CGT, p. 55.[7]

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[5] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Heb 2:14–18). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.
[6] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 284). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
[7] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Heb 2:16). Moody Press.

b) The idea of compassion as an attribute of priests is not found in the O. T. On the contrary, the fault of the priests was their frequent lack of sympathy with the people (see Hos. 4:4–9). In the later Jewish history, and in N. T. times, the priestly aristocracy of the Sadducees was notoriously unfeeling and cruel. The idea of a compassionate and faithful high priest would appeal powerfully to Jewish readers, who knew the deficiency of the Aaronic priesthood in that particular. [8]

10. Faithful high priest – Christ is worthy and steadfastly dependable as our Mediator before God for us. His position before God is permanent, unchangeable, and uncompromisingly committed to carrying out what He promises for us. He would serve us day and night (Rev. 12:9-10).

    a) In all things includes Jesus' humanity (v. 14) and His suffering (v. 18). Jesus participated in our nature and in our sufferings on earth so that He could be a sympathetic Mediator between God and humanity. He understands our weaknesses and intercedes for us in the presence of God the Father. He is a merciful (sympathetic) and faithful (trustworthy) High Priest. This is the first time the title High Priest occurs in Hebrews, and the first time the title is applied to Jesus Christ in the Bible. [9]

11. In things pertaining to God – Whatever Christ does for us it is based on what God directs Him to do.

    a) The element of moral obligation contemplated in the term ὤφειλεν, "it was essential," is clarified by the two purpose clauses, which follow in sequence. Only by standing with others in human solidarity could the transcendent Son of God be qualified to participate in the life of the people as a merciful and faithful high priest. What this entailed is explained in the exposition that follows, as the writer addresses himself first to the quality of faithfulness (3:1–4:14), and then to the quality of compassion (4:15–5:10). The formulation of v 17 reflects the influence of the Septuagint where the expression τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν is a standard phrase in the Pentateuch meaning "with regard to God" (e.g., Exod. 4:16; 18:19).[10]

12. Make propitiation – Christ death and resurrection paid for all our sins, placing all things below His feet, establishing Him as our High Priest, blessing us to be at peace with God (no longer under His wrath; Eph. 2:14-18) forever.

    a) Make propitiation refers to the satisfaction of the claims of a holy and righteous God against sinners who have broken His law. Christ appeased God's righteous wrath by dying on the Cross in our place (Rom. 3:21–26). Although completely perfect and

[8] Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 408). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
[9] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Heb 2:14–18). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.
[10] Lane, W. L. (1998). *Hebrews 1–8* (Vol. 47A, pp. 64–65). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

sinless, Christ voluntarily submitted to the penalty of sin, this agonizing death on the Cross. This voluntary sacrifice of Himself for our welfare satisfied the justice and holiness of God. The benefits of His sacrifice are applied to all who place their faith in Him. [11]

13. Sins of the people – We are all born in sin (Ps. 55:1; Eph. 2:3). We have willfully or intentionally sinned, and for all this Christ paid for it by His death and resurrection, so that once we accept Him in our hearts, God places the Holy Spirit in us, who regenerates our spirit. The Holy Spirit also represents His peace in us, allows us to experience the work of Christ in our hearts (Eph. 3:14-17), convicts us when we sin (John 16:7-11), and illuminates the Word so that we can work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). This is all initiated by Christ being the propitiation for our sins and our High Priest.

C. Present Help **(vs. 18):**

1. Since He Himself was tempted — The person who paid for our sins, Christ, was tempted in every way to sin just like we are, but every test proved Him sinless. Even when solicited to sin, directly confronted by Satan (Matt. 4:1-11), He did not sin. This proves that Christ was sinless, qualified to be the sacrifice for sin, could identify with our weaknesses, and could serve us comprehensively before God as our High Priest (Hebr. 4:15-16).

   a) The fear of death, arising from the consciousness of sin, could be relieved only by the intervention of the priest who stood between God and the sinner, and made reconciliation for sin. Jesus steps into the place of the high priest, and perfectly fulfils the priestly office. By his actual participation in the sorrows and temptations of humanity he is fitted to be a true sympathizer with human infirmity and temptation (ch. 5:2), a merciful and faithful high priest, making reconciliation for sin, and thus abolishing the fear of death.[12]

2. That in which He suffered – Christ was not just tempted to sin; He also experienced the evil acts that created extreme pain, but nothing caused Him to sin (Hebr. 5:8). Now He can identify when anything we go through as He serves as our High Priest. "*For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart*." (Heb 12:3; NASB)

[11] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Heb 2:14–18). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.
[12] Vincent, M. R. (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 407). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

a) Christ's suffering included temptation. He experienced the lure of sin, but He never surrendered Himself to it. He knows what it is like to be tempted, so He knows how to assist those who are being tempted.[13]

3. <u>He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted</u> – Because of all that Christ is. All that He continuously wills to do, and will continue to do, is to deliver us from Satan and the power of sin; by this He demonstrated that He has the power and ability to help us when we are tested, especially since "*He who is in us is greater than He who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4), and He is our High Priest continually. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* (1 Cor. 10:13)

4. <u>He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted</u> – Christ death placed us at peace with God, established Christ at the right hand of God, so not only can He strengthen and defend us in temptation, but He can plead our case before God if we sin when tempted.

   a) It might be good at this point to explain the difference between our Lord's ministry as High Priest and His ministry as Advocate (1 John 2:1). As our High Priest, our Lord is able to give us grace to keep us from sinning when we are tempted. If we do sin, then He as our Advocate represents us before the throne of God and forgives us when we sincerely confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:5–2:2). Both of these ministries are involved in His present work of intercession; and it is this intercessory ministry that is the guarantee of our eternal salvation (note that in Heb. 7:25 it is "to the uttermost"—i.e., eternally—and not "from the uttermost").[14]

5. <u>He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted</u> – Christ does not just represent our prayer request; He can also identify with our pain, whether it is mental, physical, or emotional. He can "*sympathize with our weaknesses*." (Hebr. 4:15)

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[13] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Heb 2:14–18). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.
[14] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 284–285). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.