

He Got Tempted

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[0 : 0 0] Hebrews 4.14 through the end of the chapter. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our confession, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw into the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Have you ever let it baffle you that Jesus was tempted? That a perfect, sinless, God-man, God himself incarnate in human flesh could actually be tempted.

It should baffle us a little bit. It is very deep waters that we are walking into tonight, but we do it together and I pray the Lord is blessing on it. We are in a series called Flesh and Blood, Jesus, and so we are thinking for these weeks about the humanity of Christ.

[1 : 1 8] We think and talk a lot about the God-ness of Jesus, but not about the fleshiness of Jesus, if you will. So that is what we are doing, the Bible makes this great point that Jesus was a human.

We honor Christ and we honor the word by thinking about this for some time. Is it true that Jesus was really tempted?

Like us, how is that even possible? In the engine room this past Wednesday, Derek spoke from James chapter 1.

In James it says that each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.

In other words, our sinful desires inside are what turn God's trials into temptations to sin. But what happens to someone who does not have sinful desires?

[2 : 1 7] How could Jesus be tempted then? Well, that has only happened twice in the Bible, actually. Once was in a garden and once was in a wilderness.

Adam and Eve, before they sinned, did not have this sinful nature. They did not have a broken, cursed sinful flesh telling them to disobey God and climb away from God.

They were perfect in that sense, before the fall. And Jesus, of course, did not have that sinful inner nature either. And in both scenarios, they did not have a sinful inner voice telling them what they should not do.

They had a sinful outer voice. In the garden it was a serpent. In the wilderness it was the devil himself. Imagine sitting down for exams at school and you are given the test and you look at it and you're like, I don't know if I can make it.

This is a difficult test. I don't really know these answers. This is going to take me forever. You or I might have the inner voice saying, why don't you just look over to your neighbor's shoulder?

[3 : 28] Why don't you just cheat a little? Well, if Jesus to sat down for that exam, he wouldn't have that voice. So it's like the devil came and sat in the seat next to him and whispered in his ear, I don't know where my page two went.

That's no good. There it is. All right. So that's the difference between that inner voice and outer voice.

It's what Jesus could say to Peter. When Peter comes up and says, hey, Jesus, you don't really have to die. Come on. Be the Messiah who conquers, not the Messiah who dies.

What does Jesus say? Get behind me, Satan, because Peter is being the voice of temptation. Peter's saying to him, he's sitting down in the chair next to him at the exam table and he's saying, why don't you cheat?

So Jesus really was tempted. He really was and he was tempted from the outside and on the inside. Now we have to understand too that Jesus's temptations were not easy for him to dismiss.

[4 : 45] Temptation is only tempting if it's tempting. Does that make sense? Temptation is only tempting if it's tempting. If Jesus wasn't actually tempted by his desires, I think he'd be making a mockery of humanity instead of dignifying it.

And he wouldn't be able to sympathize with us at all. But Hebrews 2.18 says, for because Jesus, he, Jesus himself, has suffered when tempted.

He is able to help those who are being tempted. In other words, to reverse that. Jesus can help you when you're tempted because he suffered when he was tempted.

The temptation was tempting for him and resisting the temptation was hard. To the point of suffering.

Now we might ask too, was Jesus really tempted like we are? In other words, does Jesus know personally the same sort of temptations that I face?

[5 : 49] And if not, can he really sympathize? Can he really help? Different life circumstances bring their own unique temptations, don't they?

There are specific temptations that come along with old age, with singleness in your 30s and 40s, with same-sex attraction.

There's certain temptations that come along with wealth and financial success. What do you do with those temptations?

If Jesus, as a, you know, he died as a 33-year-old Middle Eastern man in the first century, he doesn't know what it's like to be single in 34.

Not alone 44, 54. What do you do with that? Well, we need to look below the surface struggle.

[6 : 47] So the surface level, let's take singleness as an example. At the surface level, the struggle is singleness. Singleness is hard. But the desire below that is loneliness, isn't it?

And rejection. Does Jesus not know loneliness and rejection? Rejected and despised by men, his own people, his own country, his own religion, his own disciples, his own students, his own friends, turn their back on him or drove the nails into his hands.

And from the cross he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus knows loneliness. Jesus knows rejection, deeper than any of us do.

And with all of the temptations that are unique to different circumstances in life, if you go deep enough, you will find a sympathetic savior.

Because the Holy Spirit says in the book of Hebrews that he was tempted in every respect as we are, so that he could be a thorough savior, one who sympathizes and helps us.

[7 : 59] Now that's the foundation of the rest of the sermon, that Jesus really was a human or really was tempted in his humanity, and that Jesus really was tempted in every way. Those two are important.

Now we just take the Bible straight and move on. So four points tonight. Excuse me, learn about temptation from Jesus, learn about endurance from Jesus, take your temptation to Jesus and take your sin to Jesus.

So number one, learn about temptation from Jesus. When we look at the fact that Jesus was tempted, we look at this verse in Hebrews 4, what do we know? What can we learn?

Well, temptation is not a sin. You ever think of it that way? Hebrews 4, 15 says that Jesus was tempted yet without sin.

So temptation is not the same as sin. Let me put that another way. You do not have to feel guilty about your temptations.

[9 : 04] Temptation is not a sin. What's the difference between temptation and sin? Well, I like how Martin Luther put it. He said you can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop it from making a nest in your hair.

That's the difference between temptation and sin. So if Jesus was sinless and Jesus was tempted then, logically, temptation can't be a sin.

That's good news for us. Stop beating yourself up over your temptations. Now another thing that temptation is not, is it is not a sign of God's displeasure.

This is related, but think back to Luke chapter 4. The gospel accounts when Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In Luke chapter 3, right before the temptation, he's baptized, he comes out of the water, heaven cracks open, and the voice of God the Father speaks down and says, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased, and the very next thing is the spirit of God drives him out in the wilderness to be tempted.

So temptation is not a sign of God's frown. Sometimes God sends trials and tests to his very beloved servants and sons and daughters.

[10 : 33] If you are in Christ, you already have the smile of God. So please don't jump to the conclusion, which I have often jumped to, that if you're experiencing a barrage of temptations, weathering the storm, that it's because God's angry with you.

Now the last thing we learn about temptation from Jesus is that temptation is withstandable. Temptation is withstandable. Only a cruel father would give his child a job that they couldn't do.

Only a cruel teacher would give a student an exam that they could not pass. When you are in the midst of the storms of temptation, you can put your feet down on this concrete biblical truth that you can withstand this temptation.

Yes, you can. James 4, 7, Resist the devil and he will flee.

First Corinthians 10, 13, No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

[11 : 52] But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you will be able to endure it.

Sometimes, just knowing that you can get through the temptation will get you through the temptation. Now think about those last two words in 1 Corinthians 10, 13, endure it.

That's how the Holy Spirit talks about withstanding temptation is endurance. So point number two, learn about endurance from Jesus.

Let's think back to Luke chapter four for a minute. Actually you can turn to Luke four. We're just going to read a couple verses and it might be helpful to have it open. So verses one to 14 are the temptation in the wilderness section.

In verse one and verse 14 function like the book ends of that section. The technical term would be an inclusio. And that helps you let that helps let you know something crucial about everything that comes in between those bookends.

[13 : 08] So look at verse one. Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the spirit in the wilderness.

Verse 14. And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee.

Jesus endured the devil's temptations by the power of the spirit. He did not rely on his divine nature.

Jesus did not tap into his Godness when the going got tough. He suffered and was tempted with human flesh as a human.

And to endure his temptation, he had to endure it just like we can endure it by the power of the Holy Spirit. And if you love and trust Jesus, that same person called the Holy Spirit who empowered and filled Jesus of Nazareth fills and empowers you.

[14 : 12] It's the same person. That's how you can endure temptation. And endurance is also Bible wielding.

If you scan what comes between verse one and verse 14 in Luke chapter four, between those bookends, what happens is the devil comes and gives him three temptations. And to all three of the devil's temptations, what does Jesus say?

It is written. Jesus was full of Scripture and he endured temptation by using Scripture like a weapon.

What verses do you preach to your heart? When you're under temptation, what verses, what truths about God do you cling to and wield like a sword against your own sinful desires?

We should all have them. We should all find them. Sometimes it takes years to find for the Lord to speak to you in such a way through a verse that it becomes just sharp, like a weapon.

[15 : 22] But it's worth asking the Lord for. Give you these passages, these verses to help you fight temptation with. Here's one of mine. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

I love that. Now, the last thing that we learn about endurance from Jesus is this. Endurance is motivated by joy.

Endurance is motivated by joy. Hebrews 12, 1 and 2 says, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

Jesus endured for joy. So we look back at the joy that Jesus endured for, the joy of claiming us, of saving us, spending eternity with us.

We look back to Jesus's joy and that drives us forward into our joy, the joy of new obedience.

[16 : 28] Do you know the joy of an unbothered conscience? Every temptation, every single temptation is a God-given opportunity to endure for the joy of uninterrupted fellowship with Jesus and a clean conscience.

And that's a joy that, yes, is anchored ultimately in heaven, but you can have some of it now. You really can. Jesus doesn't just forgive your sins.

He cleanses you from your sins. He washes you clean. Endurance through temptation is motivated by joy.

Last two points more quickly. Point number three, take your temptations to Jesus. When we are tempted, Thomas Brooks said it this way, the old Puritan.

He said, the devil presents the bait and hides the hook. Our temptations will say, this sin, it's just pleasurable, isn't it?

[17 : 40] Look at all the joy or happiness you'll get out of it or whatever the benefit is. But the devil and your own sinful desires will not tell you of the consequences, the ugliness of sin.

He presents the bait and hides the hook. So we take our temptations straight to the cross because that's where we see clearly what it is.

That's where we see the hook of our temptations. The consequences of our sin were born in the body of Jesus instead of yours so that we don't have to do that anymore.

The devil would say that there's more joy to be had in your sin than in Jesus. There is more joy to be had in Jesus, friends, than in your sin.

Our passage in Hebrews says that because Jesus was tempted like we are, he can sympathize. Do you ever think about Jesus as sympathetic?

[18 : 49] Not pitying, not like, oh, I'm sorry for you, but real deep sympathy. Because Jesus was tempted like we are.

Here's what we can do now. We can, in prayer, we can take our temptations to the throne of grace and then we receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

That's because he was tempted. We get that great privilege. Take our temptations to him. Receive help. Number four, take your sins to Jesus.

What about when you give in to temptation? And we all do. We let temptations ride right over us and we take the opportunity to sin. We turn God's trials into temptations and then we just surrender and give up and we do what we shouldn't do.

What do we do then? Well John Owen recommends this, that we go to Jesus in prayer and we make a transaction. Do you ever have transactions with Jesus?

[20 : 01] He says that we just go and say, Lord, I've sinned and I'm sorry and I hate it. Now will you take my sin on you and then would you, Lord, would you give me your perfect obedience and righteousness?

Doesn't that sound presumptuous? But Jesus loves it. It's what he came to do. It's the reason the Son of God was incarnate in human flesh, was so that he could take your sins from you and give you his perfect endurance to give you his righteousness.

He delights in that. Make that your daily habit. Let's end there and let's do that now.

Let's approach the throne of grace with confidence and let's ask for help in time of need. We all have temptations in different ways, don't we?

They probably worsen as life gets harder and weirder. So let's go to the throne of grace now. Would you pray with me?

[21 : 19] Jesus God, we confess that we have longed too much for the comforts of this world. We have loved the gifts more than the giver. In your mercy, help us to see that all the things we pine for are shadows, but you are substance, that they are quicksands, but you are mountain, that they are shifting, but you are anchor.

We plead your forgiveness on the merits of Jesus Christ, except his worthiness for our unworthiness, his sinlessness for our sins, his fullness for our emptiness, his glory for our shame, his righteousness for our dead works, and his death for our life.

We pray and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.