

Sunday, March 5th sermon: "Christ Was Tempted Like Us -- The God of All Comforts (Pt 8)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
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Hebrews 4:14-16; Luke 4:1-13

God comforts His people, primarily by forgiving our sins, cleansing us from all unrighteousness, and reconciling us to Himself. Judgment is taken away, and everlasting life is promised!

In Hebrews 2, Christ as God incarnate in human flesh is revealed both as the sacrifice to save His people from the power of death, and as the perfect High Priest to make reconciliation to God for us.

Jesus in His humanity knows our weaknesses, our frailties, our temptations. He is at once the offering for our sin, and the presenter of that offering unto God. Thereby, He makes reconciliation for the sins of His people.

Because Christ in His humanity has suffered for us being tempted, He is able to support, encourage, and uphold His people when we are tempted.

Jesus knows by His personal human experience our troubles and trials and temptations, which He suffered for our sake, that He might save us, and sustain us, and comfort us.

Besides the end of Hebrews 2, there are at least two more times in the book where Christ's temptations and suffering in His humanity for our sins, are urged as proof that He is a faithful High Priest for us, and that He can comfort and sustain us in our temptations and trials.

In Hebrews 4, we have a great High Priest that has passed into the Heavens, and we ought to hold fast our profession of faith in Him!

He understands our infirmities and temptations, and was tempted like we are, yet without sin.

Do not waiver in trusting in Jesus, because He understands our plight.

In fact, His sinlessness is the very reason we need Him as our High Priest. He needs no sacrifice for sin, but He knows how much we do.

He overcame every temptation to sin, but we do not, and so He faithfully presents His sacrifice to take away our sin.

He is not impervious to the feeling of our infirmities, but rather was tempted in all points like we are! He is "touched with the feelings of our infirmities," the writer relates.

That phrase is a translation of the Greek word from which we derive the word "sympathize."

The Gospels provide a detailed recitation of just how the devil tempted Jesus, and the categories of that temptation are significant.

When Jesus was hungry, the devil suggested that He turn stones into bread. The devil is mocking Jesus as the creator, and taunting Him for being hungry, when He made all things. Why not use that mighty power to satisfy your physical needs?

But Christ never used His mighty power to provide for His Own wants! In His humanity, He must rely upon God His Father to provide what He needed, as He taught us to do. He would not take a short cut to satisfy His physical needs that was not available to His people. The devil wanted Jesus to step outside the limits of humanity, so that Christ would not be able to sympathize with us in our times of need.

The devil urged Jesus to prove Himself Messiah by forcing God's hand in keeping a promise, to protect Messiah from physical harm. If Jesus is Messiah, He can leap from the pinnacle of the temple, and God would keep Him safe, according to His promise.

But Christ would not tempt God by abusing God's promise to Him as Messiah. It would be presumptuous to act recklessly in order to vindicate Himself as Messiah, even though it would have miraculously proved to unbelievers that Jesus is Who He claimed to be.

Presuming on God's promises to us is a major area of our temptation and sin. Just because God has promised to provide for us, does not excuse us to act recklessly and irresponsibly.

The devil promised to give Jesus rule over the entire world, if only Jesus would bow down and worship him.

Here the devil tried to dissuade Jesus from carrying out His noble, tragic ministry, in which the people would reject Him, and He would be put to death as our sacrifice.

According to the devil, Christ could short circuit all that trouble, by worshipping him, and entering directly into His rightful reign! After all, God has promised Messiah that He will rule all the world!

Here is the temptation to grasp what we want by illicit, sinful means.

Unlike us, Jesus was entitled to all these things – provision of His physical needs, acceptance by His creatures as the Messiah, and His reign over all the world!

But He did not succumb to the devil's temptation that He seize them contrary to God's commandments.

Thus, the temptations of Christ were worse than ours, because of His greatness, and His humiliation in the incarnation. He is God of very God, eternal, and all powerful, and yet He submitted Himself to live as a man, under the law, in obedience to His Father, for the saving of His people.

Paul proclaimed that Jesus is God in all power and majesty, yet He did not grasp ahold of that, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made man by the incarnation. Then He humbled Himself further, and submitted to the death of the cross.

Christ as God has eternal, infinite power and privilege, yet He came lowly as a Lamb to be slain for us.

Surely, all of us would do anything to escape the ignominy, shame, terror, and suffering that Christ willingly and obediently bore to save us.

And on top of the devil's temptations, how much sinful men must have provoked Jesus to sin and error. We disbelieved Him, we mocked Him, we argued in front of Him about who would be the greatest in His kingdom, we denounced the death that He must suffer!

Yet He remained faithful to obey His Father in everything, and to finish perfectly His duty and purpose in the incarnation, to save us by dying in our place.

Therefore, Christ is now our faithful High Priest, Who fully understands and sympathizes with our temptations and trials.

Because of Christ's representation of us, and comfort to us, and sustaining of us in our weakness and failure, we are commanded to "come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

We must not hide from Jesus, or be afraid to admit and confess our sin, because Jesus understands our weakness and will help us when we cry out to Him.

He will never mock us in our failures, but He will bring us through every trial. Jesus comforts His people, because He suffered being tempted like we are.