

# Fighting Temptation Like Jesus

## Various Scriptures

**BI: Jesus Christ faced every temptation as a real human being leaving us an example of how to battle temptation in our own lives.**

Introduction:

Read John 6:32-58

As you know, my typical approach to preaching the Bible is to take a passage like this and explain it verse by verse. This morning, however, I want to sort of step back from the text and look at it not according to its constituent parts but as a whole. You've heard the expression that sometimes "you can't see the forest for the trees." Well, this morning I think we would benefit from stepping out of the trees for a few minutes so we can take in a bit of the grandeur of the "forest."

Friday evening I had the privilege of offering a theological (and, I trust, worship-inspiring) lecture to a group of 13-14 men on the subject of the two natures of Jesus Christ. I think I can safely say that the study of this subject over the past month has been deeply inspiring, humbling, and convicting for all of us. And somewhere along the way in my preparation last week it occurred to me that it doesn't seem fair that you, the church body, should miss out on what we have so enjoyed. And then, as I began looking at our text for this morning it occurred to me that the essence of what I taught on Friday is right before our eyes in John six.

Now, clearly this is neither the time nor the place to get into a seminary-style theological lecture, but I do think we would benefit from thinking about some of the major themes relative to the who Jesus is.

Who is Jesus? Well, Jesus is a Person unlike any other because ever since He exited the halls of heaven to live among men, He has existed as One who is both God and Man. That is to say, in the Person of Jesus Christ we have everything that it means to be God and everything it means to be man. He is, as theologians say, the Theanthropic Person – the "God-man." This is demonstrated for us here in John six.

Jesus is giving what we call the "Bread of Life Discourse" in which He explains who He is and why people should believe in Him. To illustrate who He is, Jesus comes up with a unique analogy; namely, bread that comes from heaven. Clearly, bread is a very earthy thing. Everyone knows bread. Everyone eats bread. And in a society like the one where Jesus lived people could hardly survive without eating bread. Bread was the most basic kind of nourishment necessary for human life. But the bread that Jesus was offering was unlike any kind of bread anyone had ever eaten. This bread came not from the local bakery or grocery store. This bread came down from heaven.

- 6:32 “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.”
- 6:33 “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.”
- 6:35 “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger...”
- 6:41 “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.”
- 6:42 “I have come down out of heaven.”
- 6:48 “I am the living bread of life.”
- 6:51 “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven.”
- 6:53-57 “unless you eat my flesh...”
- 6:58 “This is the bread which came down out of heaven...”

This gives us a picture of who Jesus is. He is something earthy and something heavenly. He is man but He is also God who came from heaven. The important point, however, is that Jesus is unlike anyone who ever lived or will live in heaven or earth – He is a Person who is fully God and fully man.

Let’s think about a few Scriptures that make this plain.

- John 1:1–3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.... (14) “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- Colossians 2:9 “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”
- 1 John 4:2–3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

So you see, as far as the apostles were concerned, this is was a really important truth. In fact, it is foundational to our salvation. Let me say it this way: If Jesus is not both God and man we are all doomed. Why? That’s a good question, so lets think about that.

Jesus came to earth on a mission, right? The Father sent Him to earth to accomplish something. What was it? Well, the angel told Mary He was coming to be the Savior (Lk. 2:10-11). In John 3:17 Jesus told Nicodemus that God sent Him NOT to condemn the world but that through Him the world might be saved. Then in 1 John 4:14 the apostle said, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” So Jesus’s mission was to save. Specifically, He came to rescue a world of sinners from the impending just and holy wrath of God. But how would he do that?

He couldn't simply descend from heaven and announce that He was sent from God to save the world and then offer forgiveness of sins for all who would have it. No, in order to save sinners Jesus had to do something that human beings could never have imagined. He had to become a new kind person.

You see, for all eternity, the second person of the Trinity existed as God. He lived in perfect harmony with God the Father and God the Spirit. Indeed, He was one in essence with them. All three existed as Spirit – three in Person – one in essence. But in order to save a world of sinners the second Person of the trinity had to submit to something God had never experienced in all eternity. He would have to die. And in order to do that he would have to become a man.

So, to fulfill His Father's mission the Son had to come into the world as one who is both human and divine. "Divine (As Bruce Ware explains) to be of sufficient value to pay fully and finally for the sin of the world and satisfy the offense against the honor of God; human, to die as a fit substitute in our place."<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, Paul Enns writes, "Both natures are necessary for redemption. As a man, Christ could represent man and die as a man; as God the death of Christ could have infinite value sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of the world."<sup>2</sup>

So you see, beloved, if Jesus is not both human and divine, if He is not both God and man, He cannot save us from our predicament. He cannot offer Himself as a sufficient substitute for our sins. But as both God and man, He serves as both our High priest to represent us before God and as our sacrifice to satisfy our debt to God "for the wages of sin is death."

Listen to how Paul describes it:

Philippians 2:6–8 "...Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a [slave], and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Now that is awesome!

Bruce Shelly writes:

"Christianity is the only major religion to have as its central event the humiliation of its God."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*, (2013) Crossway, (91).

<sup>2</sup> Enns, Paul P. (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 227). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language*, (2008) Thomas Nelson, (p. 3).

Now, let's take another step toward the practical implications for you and me. Think about this: The reason Jesus came was to offer Himself as a substitute in our place under the wrath of God. But the only way He could be an acceptable substitute and reverse the curses of Adam's sin was to do what Adam failed to do; namely, live His whole life in perfect holiness and obedience to God (show the need for Christ's righteousness, not just His sacrifice in Romans 5:10,14, 15, 17, 19, 21).

In Romans 5 Paul explains that sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and his sin spread to all men, but that Jesus came to undo the deadly effects of Adam's sin (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22). So Jesus came to reverse the curse, but in order to do that He would have to do something that is almost inconceivable to us.

On the one hand He had to be perfectly righteous in everything He did as a man. On the other hand, He had to resist all temptation as a man. Only after He had fulfilled all righteousness and resisted all temptation, could He bear the wrath of God as a substitute for sinners by dying on the cross. The author of Hebrews says it this way: "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things" (Heb. 2:17).

Now the important thing to notice here is that He had to resist sin and be perfectly righteous as a man. In other words, He had to do it all without relying on the strength and power of His deity. He would have to face every temptation in life the same as you and me and never give in to it... not even once.

We see this in Mat. 4, where the H.S. leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

(Read Mat. 4:1-4).

By the time Satan tempted Jesus He had been 40 days without food. Do you think He was hungry? This was a powerful temptation! But how does Jesus respond? With supernatural power? No. He battled Satan with the word of God. And the really important thing about that, beloved, is that this is an example of Jesus resisting severe temptation simply with the resources that were available to Him as a man.

On this point Russell Moore writes, "Jesus, the new humanity, went to the same testing ground as his and our ancestors... As he stood where Adam stood, he reclaimed what Adam lost. The first Adam was tested in the God-blessed garden and fell. The second Adam was tested in the God-cursed desert and won."<sup>4</sup>

Now, we are quickly running out of time so let me bring it down to a final question. How, specifically, did Jesus battle temptation? Bruce Ware in his excellent little book *The Man Christ Jesus*, writes:

Jesus did not sin, not because he relied on the supernatural power of his divine nature or because his divine nature overpowered his human nature, keeping him from sinning, but because he utilized all of the resources give

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<sup>4</sup> Russell Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ*, (2011) Crossway, (41)

to him in his humanity. He loved and meditated on Scripture... He prayed to his Father... And very significantly, He relied on the supernatural power of the Spirit to strengthen him to do all that he was called upon to do.<sup>5</sup>

Now let's think about this a little more slowly. What resources did Jesus have available to Him.

- Meditation on Scripture (Psalm 1 – “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His Law he meditates day and night...”)
- Prayer: He often rose early in the morning and sometimes stayed up all night praying to His Father.
- Reliance on the Spirit: Paul said that Galatians 5:16 “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

And we could add:

- Fellowship: When Jesus was in the garden facing the biggest temptation of His life, He invited His disciples to come with him and to pray along with Him.

The point of all this, beloved, is that Jesus' life as a human being reveals to us how we can pursue holiness and faithfulness in this life. Peter said, (1 Pet. 2:21–22) “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH.”

Conclusion:

1. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, this message is for you. Perhaps you never understood what the gospel is really all about. This is it. The Father sent His Son to earth on a mission to save sinners like you and me. And He will be your Savior if you believe. For He has said, “I am the bread of life; He who comes to me will not hunger and he who believe in me will never thirst.”
2. If you are struggling to battle temptation in your life, be encouraged that that Jesus did too, and He did it successfully using the same resources you have at your disposal.
3. For all of us who know the Lord, we should be moved to faithfulness and perseverance and worship for what He has done for us.

Hebrews 2:17–18 “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

Hebrews 4:14–15 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a

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<sup>5</sup> Ware, (84)

high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”