

JESUS SUFFERED TEMPTATION SO HE CAN HELP US IN OURS!

Question for you: How much sinning would you do if you were *never* tempted? Hard to say, right? If we had no temptations—and *no sin nature*—we would *never* sin! That’s what heaven will be like, won’t it! But...we *aren’t there yet*. We are *still* tempted—and we *still have* a sin nature; a desire within us that pulls us toward sin. We know it by experience—we’ve felt that tug—and we know it from the Bible.

James 1:14 reminds us “But every man is tempted, when he is **drawn away of his own lust**, and enticed.”

But what if we still *had* a sin nature—but were *never* tempted? Would we *still* sin? I tend to think *we would* for three reasons. 1) James 1:14; the verse you just looked at. 2) Because Adam and Eve *did not have a sin nature*, but were tempted to sin—and gave in to that temptation! 3) Because during Christ’s reign on earth during the Millennial Kingdom, people who are born *will have a sin nature*. And although they will live in a fairly “temptation-free” world, many still rise up against Christ at the end of the 1000 years!

Don’t fixate on Adam and Eve not having a sin nature—or the 1000-year reign of Jesus on earth.

Here’s what *I want us to think* about. We would certainly sin *less* if we were *never tempted*—but...we would *also sin less* if we *didn’t give in* to temptation! Agree? Easier said than done, though, right?

--But...too often times *we neglect to go to* the One who can help us overcome that temptation.

--Too often times we forget that *that is one of the reasons* Jesus became like us.

--And all too often we forget this very important truth: Jesus suffered temptation so He can help us in ours!

We see that truth in Hebrews 2. Let’s turn there; please follow along as I read verses 14-18. We are going to be focusing our attention on vs 18 “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour [aid] them that are tempted.”

The outline this morning is going to be in the form of questions that will be “asked” of the text.

1. *Who suffered—and what it means to suffer?*

Vs 18 “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted...” A. The man who suffered

Who is our verse referring to? *Who* is the One who hath suffered, being tempted? One of those “duh” questions, right? Even though it *doesn’t say* “Jesus,” we know it is *referring to* Jesus. How do we know?

Because vs 9 mentions Jesus by name...and vs 10 talks about the captain of our salvation...and vs 11 talks about the One who is not ashamed to call us brethren...and vs 14 talks about the One who died for us...and vs 15 talks about the One delivered us from the fear of death...and vs 17 refers to our merciful and faithful high priest that made reconciliation for our sins!

It is interesting to me, though, that the writer didn’t just say “Jesus hath suffered being tempted” or “He hath suffered being tempted...” It says, “He Himself.”

He Himself really emphasizes *who it was* that suffered. And since it is emphasized, God wants us to really grasp the significance that Jesus Himself *really, truly* suffered! But what does that mean?

B. The meaning of suffered

“Suffer” comes from the Greek word “pas’kho” and is used roughly 40 times in the NT. It means to “feel heavy emotion, to undergo evils, to be afflicted.” It is important not to miss the *two aspects* contained in the meaning. It is not only *undergoing the evils*; it is the ability to *sense the evils*—to feel the heavy emotion and pain—as you are going through it.

Here’s an illustration that might help. Ever hear of a thing called “pain tolerance?” We know what that means, right? Some people can handle *a lot* of pain, some people *not so much!* And then there are people who can’t feel pain *at all*—at least in *certain parts* of their body! For example, some people don’t feel anything in *their feet*. If they break their toe or cut their foot, they *don’t feel the pain* that they should feel.

Jesus wasn’t like that, though. Because He was made *like us*, He *felt pain* the same way we do!

2. When did Jesus suffer temptation? We'll get into some of the specific situations in a little bit, but the main thing I wanted to point out here is that Jesus suffered *in the past*. "...He Himself **hath suffered...**" Although He is **currently** a merciful high priest now, He is **not** a current "sufferer." His suffering **is done**—never to be repeated. And—just like Jesus—someday **our suffering** will be over. No more crying...no more death...no more pain... no more sorrow...and no more suffering. "And all God's people said...???"

What is really interesting to me is the **tense** of the verb. "Hath suffered" is **past** tense—we see that in the English. But there is an added aspect in the Greek that we don't always see in English. Instead of just being in the **past** tense, it is in the **perfect** tense. What does that mean? It means that it is a **past action**—with on-going results! Here's an example of the **present perfect tense** in English: "I have taken the wrong path."

The **past action** was taking the wrong path; the **on-going result** is that they are still on the wrong path!

Think of what that means in vs 18. We have the **past action**—Jesus' suffering—but we also have on-going results. What are the results that continue **to the present**? Jesus' past suffering—especially His death on the cross—**still pays** for our sins...even though it happened 2000 plus years ago!

Let's consider next... **3. How did Jesus suffer temptation?**

Jesus suffered in a number of different ways, didn't He? Because He took on flesh, He suffered the **limitations of humanity** like we do. He was hungry, thirsty, and tired. And—like us—He suffered bodily pain. In His case, though, it was an **excruciating, torturous** pain.

He also suffered **emotional pain** like we do. He felt the pain of being **rejected**—and **alone**. He felt the pain of being **misunderstood**. He felt the pressures of **poverty**—and **popularity**. I **really wanted** to dig into some of those **this morning**, but our verse focuses on Jesus' suffering by **being tempted**. Next week—Lord willing—we will get into some of **the other ways Jesus** was tempted and why that is important to us.

So what are some examples—some ways—that Jesus suffered **temptation**? Mark your spot here, and let's turn to Matthew 4. If you have a study Bible—or a Bible with headings—the beginning of this chapter will have something like "The temptation of Jesus." This account is also found in Luke 4, but the 3 temptations in Luke 4 are given **in a different order** than what we have in Matthew.

Why are they in a different order in Luke? **I don't know**—that's why I asked the question 😊! Please follow along as I read vs 1-4. Here we have the...

A. Temptation to turn stones into bread

Wouldn't that be something if one of us could do that? Instead of bringing **empty egg cartons** to church, we'd be bringing buckets of stones—and **empty bread bags!** My guess is that a good number of us would want to get in on that! Imagine the line behind whoever's **car** after church! Would probably **be a semi**, right?

But none of us **can do that**—so none of us are **tempted** to do that. That temptation was **unique to Jesus** as the Son of God. So how does Jesus being tempted in this way help **Him relate to us—and us to Him**? Here, I believe, is how. Just as Jesus was tempted to **do wrong** in order to fulfill a natural **desire of His body**—in this case, **food**—we are tempted to do wrong to fulfill the desires of **our body!**

--Are people sometimes **so hungry** and desperate **for food** that they steal to get it? **Yes, they do!**

--Do some people have such a strong craving to **make their body feel** a certain way that they will put **drugs** into their body—even though they know it could kill them? **Yes, they do!**

--Are some people—especially men—tempted to let their **imagination run wild** by looking at things they know they shouldn't? **Yes, they do!**

I obviously could go on, but I believe you get the point: We are tempted to do wrong in order to satisfy **natural, bodily desires** and Jesus was tempted in the same way! **How long** had it been since Jesus had eaten? **40 days!**

Can a person **live** 40 days without food? Yes, they can—look it up on "DuckduckGo!" But they would be extremely weak—and hungry—and probably **willing to do almost** anything for food! So Jesus knows what it means to be tempted—and He **withstood** the temptation. He did not cave. He is able, then, to help us with the same kind of temptation.

Look now at verses 5-7. Here we see the... B. Temptation to jump off the pinnacle of the temple

Once again, this is a temptation that is **unique to** Jesus. **None** of us—in **our right mind**, at least—would think we could throw ourselves off a tall building and expect angels to catch us before we hit the bottom! Although that would not be a real temptation **for us**, it was a **real temptation** to Jesus!

Why? Because He **really was** the Son of God—and He **really did have angels** at His “beck and call.” How do we know that? From what Jesus said while in the garden of Gethsemane!

Mt 27:53 “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and **He shall presently give me** more than twelve legions of angels?” If Jesus had **roughly 72,000 angels** on stand-by waiting for His command, He certainly could have called **two or three** to give Him a soft landing after jumping off the temple!

But again, we must ask how **Jesus** being tempted in this way **relates to us** and how **we** are tempted. Notice again vs 7 “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not **tempt** the Lord thy God.”

Tempt means “**to prove** or to test; **to put to proof** God’s character and power.”

--In essence, Jesus was telling Satan, ‘If I jump off, I’m **testing God** to prove that He is God.’

--**Do we** tempt God to prove that He is God? I believe we do; here’s how. Notice the warning vs on your h/o.

Gal 6:7 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: **for whatsoever a man soweth**, that shall he also reap.”

Heb 12:6 “For whom the Lord loveth **He chasteneth**, and **scourgeth every son** whom He receiveth.”

Maybe I’m looking at it too simply, but here’s what I’m getting at. If we **know** we are doing wrong—and insist on **continuing** to do wrong anyway—aren’t we “tempting” God **to prove that He is God** by bringing consequences into our lives? I believe we are!

--Here’s another way to look at it, ‘Poor decisions on my part doesn’t mean God is obligated to bail me out!’

Do people do that sometimes? Yes, they do!

--If you foolishly **spend money** on things you don’t need (& can’t afford), don’t expect God to **give you money!**

--If you continually make **unhealthy choices** regarding what you put **into your body**, don’t expect God to keep **you healthy!**

--And if you **drive recklessly** and don’t obey traffic laws, don’t expect God to protect you from **getting a ticket!**

Now verses 8-10. Here we see the... C. Temptation to do things our way—not God’s

Of the 3 temptations Satan threw at Jesus, this is probably the **most intriguing**. Here’s why.

1) First, it is the **most absurd**. Did Satan **really think** Jesus would just “bow down to him?”

2) Second, is this a **true claim**? Could Satan **really give** Jesus the kingdoms of the world **at that time**—or was **he lying**? Commentators are somewhat divided on this, but I believe Satan **did have** the authority to do this.

The crux of the temptation—in my opinion—is this: Jesus will **someday rule** all the nations of the world, but He **had to suffer**...and die...and rise again...and return to heaven, **first**. I believe Satan **knew that**—he **quoted the Bible** in this passage and probably knows it better than we do!

Satan’s offer to Jesus was **to skip** the agonizing pain of the crucifixion—and go **straight to being** the King of all the earth! How strong was this temptation? Probably stronger than we think! Here’s why I say that.

--In Jesus’ **humanity**—His humanness—He would **feel everything** everyone else felt when they were crucified.

--In Jesus’ **deity**, I believe He would **know ahead of time** what it would feel like—thus increasing the dread!

--And—in a way that our finite minds cannot comprehend—I believe He somehow knew what it would be like **to be forsaken by the Father** when He was made sin for us!

Again, we must ask, how does Jesus withstanding this temptation relate to us? Because everyone of us is tempted to do things **our way**—or **Satan’s way**—and **not God’s way!**

--Instead of seeking first **God’s** kingdom, we seek first **our** kingdom!

--Instead of having the attitude “**He** must increase, but I must decrease;” we have the attitude “**I** must increase, but **He** must decrease.”

--And instead of having the attitude, “Lord, what wilt thou **have me to do;**” we have the attitude, “Lord, this is **what I’m going to do!**”

Jesus didn't give into the temptation to do things the easy way, though. He **withstood the temptation**—and can certainly help us do the same!

Lastly, let's consider... **4. Why Jesus suffered temptation?**

We have the answer back in Hebrews 2:18; let's turn there. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." "Succour" is an old English word that means to "aid, help, support." So **how** does Jesus' suffering temptation in the past aid us? How does it help us?

A. Encouragement to come to Him. Jesus—because He is the all-knowing God that **made us**—could **know** what suffering was like **without experiencing** it. Stated another way, Jesus **did not have to experience** suffering through temptation to know what it was about!

But...because Jesus became man—and suffered temptation—we **know** that He knows what suffering temptation is all about! He did it **for our benefit**—not His! And because He has gone through what we go through, it **encourages us to come to Him** because He understands what temptation is all about! And He never gave in; He never lost a battle to temptation!

'But Pastor, Jesus **didn't have** a sin nature! Didn't He have an **unfair advantage** over us? Wasn't it **easier for Him** to say "No" to sin because He was God? And just **how intense** was the temptation of Jesus?

I agree with the suggestion that Jesus **felt temptation more** than any sinful human being could have. Why? **W.H. Griffith Thomas** put it like this: "The answer seems to be that only He has **felt the full force** of temptation who has **never yielded to it.**" (A Systematic Theology, Rolland McCune, Vol 2, pg 153)

Here's kind of a lame illustration, but hopefully it will help get the point across. Suppose two people love chocolate—and both are trying to "give it up." Who overcomes and resists the most temptation: 1) the person who looks at a candy bar on a billboard driving down the freeway; or 2) the person who works at a chocolate factory, then goes home and swims in a chocolate-filled swimming pool and sleeps on silk chocolate sheets? I told you it was lame 😊!

The point, though, is **we give in early** and easily; Jesus never gave in once! So the **intensity** of His temptation was ramped up! And because He experienced **intense temptation**, we know He understands ours!

A second way Jesus' suffering helps us is... B. Example of how to overcome.

I think you'd agree that the **best people to learn from** are those who are **experts** in what it is you want to learn! I attempted to **pole-vault** while in high school. Our coach—a big guy—would hold a straight pole and us vaulter wanna-be's would run up to the pole, grab it, and hang on while he pushed the pole toward the pit.

We would kick our feet up into the air, then land on the mat. In reality, that is **not pole-vaulting**! Fast-forward forty years and my second son is now attempting to pole vault. You know how much I helped him?

Zero! I **had not learned** how to do it—so I **could not teach him** how to do it! Thankfully, someone else could—and did!

Back to overcoming temptation. Doesn't it make sense that we will **learn best** how to overcome temptation from Someone **who always did it** and never failed once! Of course, it does! How did Jesus overcome temptation? By using Scripture! Three times Satan tempted Jesus; three times Jesus said, "It is written..."

How did Jesus' suffering temptation make Him able to aid us? 1) Because it encourages us; 2) Because it provides an example to us; and because it provides... C. Empowerment to overcome

People who have experienced the same temptations we face can certainly **be understanding**. They can also be **sympathetic**—they can genuinely care. But **people** are often limited as to **how much help** they can give. They can give advice—and sometimes they can encourage—but they can't be with you 24/7.

But God can be with you 24/7—and is with you 24/7! He is **not limited** in ability, time, or wisdom.

--He can give "grace to help in time of need" we are told in Hebrews 4:16.

--He is able to make "...all grace abound toward you" we are told in II Cor 9:8.

What will God's aid look like? 1) Sometimes God's aid is a distraction from the temptation. The phone rings... the doorbell rings...the dog barks...your spouse calls to you from the other room.
2) Sometimes God's aid is through a friend. They know your struggle and have asked you to call them if and when you need to, so you do.
3) Sometimes God's aid is in the form of a Bible verse that He brings to your mind that corrects your thinking or encourages your heart.

Back to Hebrews 2. Verse 17 reminds us that we have a merciful and faithful high priest that is there for us **when we sin**. But let's not forget that God's preference is that **we don't sin!**

--Jesus became a man—and suffered temptation as a man—so **we know He knows what it is like!**

--But He also **overcame temptation**—every single time—and is able—and willing to help us overcome temptation, too!

--The problem is not Jesus' ability or willingness—it is our failure to seek His aid.

Too often times we are content to **seek forgiveness** after the fact instead of seeking God's help to avoid sinning in the first place....

One last thought before we sing a closing hymn. I mentioned earlier that we sometimes "test" God by making foolish decisions, then asking Him to bail us out.

The most foolish decision—hands down—is to reject God's way to get into heaven. **John 14:6.**

--If you reject God's way to get to heaven in this life, He will not bail you out in the next!