

A Heart That Understands Our Temptations

Glimpses Into The Heart of Jesus

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Bible Text: Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:15
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The scripture reading this evening comes from Matthew 4 and the text for the preaching is found in Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4. First we read Matthew 4. the first 11 verses. The catechism students looked at this a few weeks ago in catechism class. Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. We read this because it gives us an account of when Jesus was tempted. Matthew 4. Jesus has been baptized by John the Baptist, and then we read that the Spirit brings him into the wilderness. Chapter 4,

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Now understand that rightly Jesus is not saying to Satan, "You shall not tempt me," but Jesus is applying that to himself. "I may not tempt the Lord my God. It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. I may not tempt the Lord my God."

Verse 8,

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text for the preaching is found in Hebrews 2:17 and 18 and Hebrews 4:15. Hebrews 2. I can actually start at verse 14 to give a little bit of the context. Hebrews 2 :14.

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily [truly] he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Now part of the text, verses 17 and 18,

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. [Especially verse 18,] 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour [to help] them that are tempted.

And then Hebrews 4:15.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the most comforting experiences in all of life is when someone can truly sympathize with you in your afflictions. When you are feeling discouraged, when the feeling of futility begins to flood your soul and you feel overwhelmed, when the relationship goes sour or when it just feels like life is passing you by, how encouraging it is to have someone be there with you who truly understands what you are going through and who can truly enter into your feelings with you, and who then can even say, "It will be okay. It will get better. There is an end to this. I know it will get better because I have been there and it does get better." How encouraging, how comforting that is. When the longtime friend lets you down. When the close family member betrays you. When you feel deeply misunderstood. When the fallenness of this world closes in on you and it makes you just want to throw in the towel and be done with life, how encouraging it is to have someone there who is with you who truly understands what you're going through and who can speak to you the right words that you need to hear at just the right time. Isn't this, after all, why the Christian loves the book of Psalms so much and we love singing the Psalms, and why when we have a hardship or a sorrow or struggle in life, we often go to the Psalms for a word of comfort? Because there we find that others in the past have experienced what we're experiencing now and there we find comfort in the midst of our struggles, words of hope and encouragement.

Well, just as much as all that is true, so this is also true, one of the most discouraging things you can experience is when there is no one there who can or who does sympathize with you, so that you are all alone left to yourself and it seems no one understands, no one cares to understand. Maybe this is what teenagers sometimes experience with their parents, when their parents forget a little bit what it is to be a teenager and all the things that you're dealing with as a teenager or young adult and you feel alone, no one understands. Maybe this is what elderly saints experience when their children or grandchildren simply don't understand or don't give thought to the struggles and sorrows that they experience in old age. Maybe this can be an area of struggle for husbands and wives at times where husbands and wives simply don't understand what the other person is feeling and it's it's a hard, it's a weakness and it's hard. Maybe you feel all alone with no one to talk to, no one who can come along and can truly feel what you feel or who can sympathize with you so that you're tempted to throw your hands up and say, "No one understands my loneliness. No one understands my pain. No one understands my inward sorrow." Have you been there?

Well, beloved, one of the greatest comforts that the Christian faith affords us is this: you always have a friend who understands. You always have a high priest who gets it, who understands perfectly. You have a brother. You have a Savior. You have a Lord who understands perfectly the pain and the struggle and the temptations that you're facing and that you're going through. You always have one who is able to sympathize with you and who does sympathize with you, and not only who sympathizes with you, but who is able to succor you and help you, and give you that help you stand in need of. Not just a comforting word either but who gives you the power, who gives you the grace and the strength to continue on through the sorrows and the hardships of life. That's what the text this evening is all about. As a Christian, as a Christian, you have a friend who knows exactly the sorrow and the pain you are going through. You have a friend who sits with you, who embraces you, who is with you. This is who your Jesus is, beloved. This is the heart of your Savior. You have a Savior whose heart is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, who was in all points tempted like we are. He understands our sorrows. He understands our struggles. He understands the temptations that maybe you don't want to admit to anyone else. He understands the temptations.

We take as our theme this evening, "A Heart That Understands Our Temptations." We look at three things under that theme. First, Jesus' temptations; second, Jesus' sympathy; and third, Jesus' help. In order to glean the comfort found in Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4, we really need to understand what it means when it says that Jesus was tempted. That stands at the heart of everything tonight. If we're going to appreciate the comfort found in these verses, we need to understand what it means that Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Jesus was really tempted. Now in order to understand that there's two things we have to look at. First, what is a temptation; and second, who is Jesus who experienced those temptations?

So first, what is a temptation? Let's start there. The basic idea of a temptation is this: putting someone to a test, putting someone through a trial. Now we almost automatically think of a temptation as involving sin of one kind or another, but that's not necessarily the

case. In its most basic idea, a temptation is this: it is putting of someone to the test. Now on the one hand, this is what God does when God sends us a trial. He puts us to the test. Now God doesn't tempt us in the sense that God tries to seduce us to sin or God makes sin look attractive so that we might fall into the sin. That's not what God does, but God does try his people. He tests his people for the purpose of strengthening their faith, showing them his power at work in them, showing them his faithfulness to them. On the other hand, however, a temptation is also something that Satan carries out. Satan is one who tempts, and when Satan tempts what he does is he tries to seduce us to sin. He makes sin look as attractive as possible and with the temptation he tries to get the one who is tempted to fall into the sin. So God sends a trial and Satan uses that to tempt God's people to sin.

Now that idea is especially the idea of the word "tempted" in the text this evening, Hebrews 2:18 and Hebrews 4:15. These verses are describing Satan's wicked purpose of trying to bring Jesus into sin. All throughout Jesus' life Satan was tempting Jesus so that he might fall into sin and come to ruin. Now to make another distinction about talking about temptations, we should recognize that there are different ways of looking at a temptation. First of all, we can speak of a temptation as the outward object that is used to entice someone to sin. For example, you can tempt someone to sin by dangling \$1,000,000 in front of them. Or you can tempt someone to sin by dangling a cookie in front of them. The \$1,000,000 or the cookie is what is being used to tempt the person. That's the outward object that is used to entice a person to sin. But then second of all, not only is there that outward object, but there is the inward struggle that takes place within a person when that person is presented with the temptation. For example, maybe \$1,000,000 is not a big temptation to one person and he doesn't have to struggle against that \$1,000,000 very strongly, but maybe the cookie is a bigger temptation. He has a bigger struggle resisting the cookie than resisting the \$1,000,000.

Well, here in Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4, it's especially this latter idea that's being referred to, not so much the outward object that is used to entice, but the inward struggle. The inward struggle. Jesus was tempted and the point is Jesus inwardly was tempted. It's not as if Jesus said to Satan with the wave of a hand, "What meaningless offers you make. What you say means nothing to me." No, Jesus was tempted. Jesus saw the attraction of the sin. We'll clarify that in a moment. Jesus saw the attraction of Satan's offer. Satan's offers were compelling and as Jesus faced the temptations of the devil, Jesus had an inward struggle within himself. Also, just think of Jesus' struggle in the garden of Gethsemane just before he's arrested. He's wrestling with God in the in the depths of the garden of Gethsemane and his sweat is becoming as great drops of blood. And what was he struggling with? What was he praying? He had to pray, "Not my will but thy will be done." And three times he had to pray that, "Not my will but thy will be done." There was an inward struggle that Jesus experienced.

Now this is very important to establish, beloved. We need to say more and we need to clear some of this up, but the point right now is this: Jesus understands what a temptation is. Just as a temptation is a hard ordeal for you and it's a struggle for you, and you have an inward struggle and you have to battle against hard temptations, so it was with Jesus.

Listen to Hebrews 2:18, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted." He suffered being tempted and yet there's this, in the temptations he faced he suffered. He suffered because of the hard temptations he faced. These were real temptations. That's the point of the passage otherwise what's the point in saying this? Listen again to Hebrews 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but," in fact, "was in all points tempted like as we are."

Jesus knows what it means to struggle against temptation. That needs to be emphasized. But now moving forward, we might ask how does this work? How is this possible? Jesus was really tempted, he really internally struggled so that he suffered in his temptations, and yet he was without sin. And I may add, part of the issue is even this: Jesus couldn't sin because as to his person, he's the second person of the Trinity. He is God come in the flesh and so he can't sin because God can't sin. And yet, according to his human nature in body and soul, he suffered being tempted. The issue is, then, how can Jesus be truly tempted and yet not be guilty of sinning? And here we have to look at who Jesus was who suffered under these temptations.

Jesus was one without a fallen human nature. When we talk about having inward struggles against temptations, we're inclined to say that automatically those inward struggles in and of themselves are sinful, and we think that way because that's our own experience with our own inward struggles against sin. You see, when we battle against the temptation to sin, we're not just battling against an outward object, a sinful temptation, but we're also battling against that old man of sin within us, an old man of sin that is already attracted to the sin and is in favor of the sin and already at that point of the struggle we're already sinning because I'm accountable for that sinful nature. We're struggling, we're struggling against our own sinful desires. So we find it hard to distinguish between the temptation from outside of us and the temptation from within ourselves exactly because the outward temptation to sin always captures the desires of our sinful natures.

I think you understand what I'm talking about. When I'm tempted to lust or when I'm tempted to steal or when I'm tempted to lie, I'm already guilty of sin because there's that old man of sin within me that is attracted to the sin, and that pulls me to the sin. And so we automatically suppose that inward struggles against temptations are already a sign of sin, however, what we need to realize is that Jesus did not have a sinful nature. Jesus was like unto us in all points except sin. Yes, Jesus had a true, full, complete human nature, a real human body just like ours, a real human soul just like ours with a mind and an intellect and emotions and will, but Jesus did not have any inclination to sin or any affinity to sin. Jesus did not have that inward pull and attraction toward sin. Jesus was the one, he was the only one who did not sin as he was tempted by Satan.

But the question still comes, doesn't it: how does this actually work? Jesus was truly tempted. He had to struggle within himself. Satan tempted him fiercely, and yet he did not, Jesus did not sin. How does that work? And I suppose the question is: what did Satan have to work with when he went about tempting Jesus? With us, he has our sinful natures. What does he have with Jesus? How can Satan bring Jesus to see any attraction

towards sin? And now here's where I want to make my clarification, we need to make a careful distinction here between being attracted to sin, that's one thing being attracted to sin, and the other thing, seeing the attraction of sin. Jesus did see the attraction of sin. Now let's look at that for a moment. I asked the question: what did Satan have to work with when he went about tempting Jesus? Well, we can sum it up with this: Jesus in his human nature, who he was as a man, Jesus had good and upright affections and feelings and longings which throughout the course of his entire life he had to constantly put under the will of his heavenly Father. Jesus had entirely good desires, even holy desires which he was called upon by God to put off and to deny for the sake of following the will of his heavenly Father. And it was those desires, entirely good and even holy desires in themselves, in themselves, which Satan worked with and focused on. Satan tempted Jesus to put his own desires, his own longings, his own feelings, before the will of his heavenly Father.

Well, what were these desires Jesus had? Well, we can look at the three temptations in Matthew 4. First of all, there were the entirely good and natural desires Jesus had in his human body for food and for water, and to avoid physical pain and suffering. That's an entirely natural and good desire. Jesus had that desire as a man, just like you and me. And in the first temptation, Satan played upon that good desire of Jesus in order to lead Jesus away from the path that God had marked out for Jesus. There's nothing sinful about wanting your hunger cravings satisfied but God's will for Jesus was that Jesus trust God provision, God's care, God's provision, and God's will for Jesus was to remain on the path of hunger and suffering until the Lord, his Heavenly Father, provided him his food. But Satan tempted Jesus to avoid that path, to avoid that trial, that path of self-denial and Satan did so by tempting Jesus to put his own hunger cravings before trusting his heavenly Father. That's what Satan worked with and after 40 days of fasting, Jesus really understood the attraction of turning stones into bread and satisfying his hunger cravings. You can understand that.

Second, there was the entirely good and natural desire of Jesus as a man to prove his Sonship, to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. That's an entirely natural and holy desire. Jesus had that desire. And in the second temptation in Matthew 4, Satan plays upon that good desire of Jesus by questioning Jesus on the matter and trying to get Jesus to prove that he's the Son of God, but to prove it in a sinful way by tempting Jesus to tempt God. "Go to the pinnacle of the temple, drop yourself and see if the angels will catch you, because isn't that what's promised in Psalm 91, his angels will come and catch you?" Jesus says, "That's tempting, God. I may not tempt God." By the way, there's a nice article in the Standard Bearer on that whole subject of tempting God. But God's will for Jesus was that Jesus at this time continued to walk that path of humble obedience and self-denial. If it meant mockery and if it meant disgrace, walk the path God wants you to walk not the path that you want to walk.

Then third, there was also the entirely good and natural desire Jesus had as a man, God come in the flesh, to receive his kingdom. That's why he came to earth, to obtain his kingdom, and that was an entirely natural and good holy desire. Jesus had that desire, and in the third temptation in Matthew 4, Satan plays upon that good desire of Jesus by

offering Jesus another way to obtain the kingdom than the way of suffering and self-denial, than the way his heavenly Father had marked out for him.

And then think of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had the entirely good and natural desire to avoid the suffering of hell, to avoid being forsaken of his own heavenly Father whose fellowship was life to him. He knew what was coming and his human nature was shrinking back from that suffering, that hell. And even as his human nature shrank back from that suffering, he nevertheless prayed, "Not my will but thy will be done." And the point is, even as he suffered being tempted, there was no moral defect on his part in the struggle. He struggled and he endured through the temptation perfectly. Even as he struggled, he was perfectly submitting himself all the time to the will of his heavenly Father.

So let it be emphasized in all these things Jesus was not attracted by sin, Jesus' desires were not towards sin, he had entirely good desires, but Jesus did see the attraction of sin. He did understand how Satan was presenting an easier way for him than the way his heavenly Father had marked out for him. He saw the attraction, but he never once said in the depths of his heart, "That's what I truly want." Again, Jesus never had any inward compulsion to lying or stealing or adultery, but Jesus did see how the way of sin seems to be easier, an easier way for the child of God. And Jesus, who was fully man, did have to exercise himself in order to say no to the attraction of sin and the temptation to avoid the way of the cross. As Hebrews 5:8 puts it, he learned obedience. He learned obedience through the things that he suffered.

He suffered being tempted. He suffered as the very Son of God who had to endure such complete humiliation and who had to continue faithfully down that path of self-denial his heavenly Father had marked out for him. That was his whole life. A life of battle. A life of self-denial. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief because the path that his Father had marked out for him. And what you see throughout Jesus' temptations is that his temptations were always centered on this: to depart from the way of the cross, to depart from the way of obedience, to depart from the way of suffering, that way of self-denial, ultimately to depart from the way of the cross and to try to fulfill his work by going another way than the God-ordained way of the cross. And constantly Jesus had to say no to the outward temptation. Constantly he had to keep the desires of his humanity in tune with God's will and walk that path of obedience. He learned obedience by the things he suffered.

Now congregation, as we move on to the second point of the sermon, let me ask you this question: is this not essentially the exact same kind of temptation that you face every single day of your life as a child of God as you live out of the new man? Is this not exactly what all your temptations to walk in sin boil down to? To give up carrying your cross? To go the way of sin? To go a different way than the way the Lord is leading you because carrying your cross means a life of suffering? It means a life of self-denial, renouncing your own will, and even the good and even holy desires that you might have, submitting to God's will for your life. Is this not what all our temptations come down to, to begin walking in the way of sin exactly because the way of sin appears to be easier? Is

that not exactly where the struggle against sin lies? You see where the pathway of sin appears to be more attractive than the way of obedience, the path of suffering seems burdensome and difficult, a life of holiness involves so much, so many sacrifices, so many costs and denials, and constantly the battle is this: to renounce my own will and follow the Lord's will. Meanwhile, Satan is always there presenting me with what sometimes appears as attractive alternatives. Yes, your old man of sin, in your old man of sin you feel the pull to sin, but that's not where the difficulty lies. That's not where your struggle lies in your old man of sin. In your old man of sin you have no struggle against sin, but the struggle against temptation lies exactly in the new man, the new man you have in Jesus Christ to say no out of the new man to the old man and to the temptations of sin wherever those temptations may come from, whether it be the old man or the world, or from Satan.

To bring in the book of Hebrews for a moment, this is exactly the kind of temptation that the Hebrew Christians were facing in their context. They were Christians who had converted from Judaism and they had family members who were persecuting them as a result. They knew who Jesus was as their Savior. They knew the joy of belonging to Jesus Christ and having the forgiveness of sins, and yet the temptation that they were facing was this: as newly converted Christians, they saw that to be a Christian meant a painful life of self-denial and a life of hardship and sorrow and suffering and persecution. They had their Jewish family members and their Jewish friends who were making life so hard on them. And there's Satan in the background making that familiar life of Judaism appear attractive to them. But you can understand how these Hebrew Christians must have just wanted their old friendships back. How they must have wanted their old family relations back to how they used to be before they became Christians. Maybe if they had pictures back then, they would they say, "I wish our family was like how it was 10 years ago when we had this beautiful family picture together, and now there's none of that anymore. Our family is broken up."

How these Hebrew Christians must have felt the pull to go back to what was familiar to them and what had been for so many years the right thing to do, to keep the Old Testament laws and to sacrifice at the temple, and now life is different and they see it because Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled all the types and shadows, and now how difficult all this must have been for them as new converts to live faithfully out of Jesus Christ. And the writer to the Hebrews is saying this, "You Hebrew Christians, my brothers and sisters in Christ, realize this: your Savior Jesus Christ understands. That's the point, he understands you. He understands that inward struggle. He understands the suffering. He understands how that way of sin can appear to be so attractive. He knows the good and even pure desires you may have that might never be fulfilled in this life. He knows your sufferings. He can sympathize with you. He does sympathize with you. He suffered in his temptations just as you suffer in the new man in your temptations. He does not just call you to the way of self-denial and the way of suffering, but he is the one who already walked that path himself. He understands." That's what's being communicated to the Hebrews in the book of Hebrews, and you can see it throughout the whole letter, and it comes out very beautifully in the passage we're looking at tonight.

Well, that's the Hebrew Christians. I can ask you the question this evening: what are the temptations that you are facing? Do you feel the temptation to give up the Christian life at times? Let's be honest with ourselves, to stop carrying your cross? There are hard things God does and calls us to do, aren't there? I think there are many who are spiritually discouraged right now. Looking at our denomination, looking at things in the church world, maybe looking at our own families, our own friendships, our own lives, maybe you experienced something similar to what these Hebrew Christians were facing. Family members pressuring you to compromise a life of godliness, mocking you and ridiculing you. Maybe somewhere else in your life you're tempted to compromise God's holy will. Maybe it's the struggles that come with a life of singleness, the death of a loved one, having to deal with sin in the church, having to make sacrifices, and you look at the path God is calling you to walk and you feel very acutely that your life does not belong to yourself. "This life is not mine. I'm a pilgrim and a stranger," and let's be honest, it can be wearisome. And I want church to be a happy place and it seems sometimes like it's not a happy place because there's so many discouragements and, frankly, so much sin. And we wish church was a place where we could get away from it all. And then you see your own sins and maybe you get discouraged and you see how in this life we all have but a very small beginning of the new obedience, and then Satan comes along and he knows how to tempt you, doesn't he? And he makes rebellion, indulgence in the lust of the flesh look attractive. Just escape for a while. It makes the way of obedience appear so miserable and undesirable.

Whatever your temptation may be, God's word this evening says this: your Savior understands the struggle. In all the ways that you are tempted in the new man to react to your earthly circumstances sinfully, Jesus was tempted. He understands the pain of losing a loved one. Not only that, but Jesus even had to see his own mother watch him as he was nailed to the cross and died. He understands these pains. Jesus understands what loneliness feels like when it seems no one understands you. Jesus understands what it feels like to be mocked for your faith, to be mocked for who you are. Jesus knows the temptations to sin that go along with all these things. Why do you think Jesus had the prayer life that he had? Why do you think he had the prayer life that he had even right there in the garden of Gethsemane? Because he was a man just like you and me who was tempted. In all points, he was like us except for sin. He's also God, but as a man he was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin. He understands the sorrow that devotion to God may cost you. He understands how bearing your cross is painful. Of all people Jesus understands. The same body you have he had. The same kind of soul you have he had. And in all points of his human nature he was tempted just like you are in your human nature. Tempted in his intellect. Tempted in his emotions. Tempted in his will. Tempted in his attitudes. Tempted in his body. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He's not detached from our sufferings but he has entered all our sufferings with us.

And do not say, congregation, that just because Jesus never once fell into sin that he doesn't understand the struggle. Do not say that just because Jesus didn't have a sinful nature, he still doesn't understand my struggle. Oh no, the exact opposite is the case. That reality only aggravated his sufferings to be even more. For you see, we are so weak that

oftentimes we give in to the temptation very quickly. We sometimes barely put up a fight. Sometimes we have to acknowledge that we barely know what it means to struggle against temptation and to really suffer, to really suffer in the way of withstanding temptations. But your Jesus in his struggle against temptations, he never budged. He refused to yield to the struggle like we so often do. And the result was this: Satan had to come out in full force against Jesus. Satan used all his wits and all his resources and all his power against Jesus in his temptations. Jesus had to endure the full force of the power and cruelty of Satan's temptations. And then be mindful of this as well: Jesus didn't just suffer three or four times throughout his life, his whole life, the whole trajectory of his life was temptation exactly because his whole life's pathway was that pathway of suffering and self-denial. And every day Satan was there and Jesus had to constantly exercise himself in the way of humiliation, in the way of humiliation, in the way of humiliation.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that was his life, that was the life that he lived for you and me, beloved. And to put it respectfully to you, and to put it respectfully to myself, Jesus knows far more about the struggle against temptation and Jesus knows far more about suffering under the temptation than we will ever know. He fought the battle against temptation to sin. He fought the battle against that temptation to sin to its bitter end, even the bitter and shameful end of suffering on the accursed cross. And even on the cross he was being tempted, tempted to come down from the cross and avoid the way of suffering and self-denial. But Jesus would not give in to the temptation, even if it meant going through hell itself and hour after hour going through hell and being forsaken of God his Father and paying the punishment for all our sins and for all our own failures to withstand temptation, and he never gave in an inch to the temptations he faced.

Have we ever resisted temptation even unto death, even unto the death of hell? Even into the death of hell? Congregation, don't misunderstand, this is not to be insensitive to our sufferings. This is only to emphasize even more Jesus understands. He knows your pain and your temptation. Other people might not understand. There are things other people can't understand. Jesus does understand. He can sympathize with you, and he does sympathize with you because as this text says, he is a merciful and faithful high priest who cares for you and your pain, who cares for you and your suffering so much that he took those sufferings and those pains upon himself. And all these temptations he suffered, all these sorrows and trials, he did all of this willingly. He didn't have to. He did all of it voluntarily. He didn't have to come down from his glory in heaven. He didn't have to be steeped in humiliation for 33 years and go through hell. But he did it because he loves you. He loves you dearly and in his love for you going through what he went through, he now also sympathizes with you. As Hebrews 4:15 says, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." You do not have an unaffectionate high priest. Rather, you have the perfect, the perfect sympathizing high priest. We may never say God does not understand my pains and my afflictions. No, we ought to really say God understands these pains and these struggles and these sorrows even more than I can realize, even more than I understand them myself. Jesus sympathizes with us.

And now we need to be brief but let me say as the perfect high priest Jesus not only sympathizes with us, that's one thing, but Jesus helps us; in his sympathy, in his compassion he helps us. Hebrews 2:18, "For in that he himself had suffered being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted." He is able to help them that are tempted because he knows, he knows what it is, beloved, he knows what it is to go through the temptation you're going through. He's overcome the temptation, and he knows exactly what help you need in the temptation. He is able to help us also because he is the one who has access to heaven's throne. He's gone into the holy place, the most holy place, and he can dispense blessings to help us in our time of need and he knows exactly the measure of grace that we need in the temptation.

And the idea, of course, is not just that Jesus is able to help us but the idea is Jesus will help us. He will help you, beloved. He will help you. That's like the end of the sermon. You know Jesus in his temptations, you know he sympathizes with you, you know he can help, he will help. The word for help in verse 18 of chapter 2, that word "succor" is a very beautiful word. It's a figurative word that has the idea of to run to the cry of. He is able to run to the cry of us in our afflictions. When you cry to Jesus for help for encouragement, for compassion, for endurance, for the strength to endure, ye will run to your cry and help you. He is able to help. He's able to succor them that are tempted.

Beloved congregation, Jesus understands your tears. He understands your sufferings. He understands your temptations. The pain, the loneliness, the shame, the humiliation, the heartache and the temptation that comes with all these things, he understands it, especially at those times when no one else possibly can. He understands. And when you cry to him, he will run to you and he will give you help in the midst of life's temptations. He is your merciful and faithful high priest. Cry unto him, beloved, pour out your heart before him, confide in him to give you the grace you need for each struggle, and each temptation to carry your cross faithfully. And as Hebrews 5 goes on to say in the next verse, Hebrews 5:16, "Draw near unto the throne of grace with boldness that you may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

This is the heart of your Jesus, beloved. Enjoy your salvation. And not too just as it was with the Hebrew Christians, we might have need of patience, we need strong faith, God, our God is in control and we have Jesus. God, who is in control, has given us Jesus and giving us Jesus he will lead us and give us all things together with him. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank thee for the care that thou didst show the Hebrew Christians in their time of need and how thou didst give to them a powerful word of encouragement. And we thank thee that this is a word that thou dost give to thy people throughout the generations until Christ comes again. And we thank thee, Lord, that this is thy word to us tonight. We pray, Father, give us the faith to receive it, to enjoy it. And Lord, we pray that we might experience it. Bless our relationship with thee, Lord. Use the Sabbath day to draw us closer to thee. And in what lies ahead, Lord, may we see Jesus as the one who

understands, may we see thee as the one who understands and may we trust and wait upon thee until we are delivered. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.