

CHRIST, OUR SYMPATHIZER AND SAVIOR

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | February 12, 2023

After the exhortations,

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:1, Therefore,** while the promise of entering his rest still stands, **let us fear** lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
- ❖ **Hebrews 4:11, Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

The author now turns to comfort and encouragement.

Martin Luther commented, “After terrifying us, the Apostle now comforts us; after pouring wine into our wound, he now pours in oil.”

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:14,** 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**

Background: To the shaky believers who were tempted to return to Judaism, the author of Hebrews argues that Christ is the great and better high priest than the OT high priests. The author reasons that the high priestly ministry of Christ is a great anchor to our souls to persevere in our faith in Christ. **How is it reasonable?**

1. Christ is a great high priest who ascended to the heaven

A great high priest who passed through the heavens (Christ's ascension):

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:3,** After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high... **[The finished work of Christ]**

Focus: Hebrews 4:14, let us hold fast to our confession. Persevere / don't give up on our faith in the Gospel of Christ. Endure. Hold on.

2. Christ is a great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:15,** 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.

Focus: Hebrews 4:16, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,

Note: The above verse has been both a comfort and confusion to many Christians. We will deal with confusion before coming to the issue of comfort.

I. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

Hebrews 4:15, 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.

What is temptation? Seventeenth-century Puritan John Owen describes, “Any thing, state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, hath a force or efficacy to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever.”

a) If Christ is tempted, then how can He be God?

James 1:13, Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Matthew 4:1, Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted by the devil**.

Hebrews 4:15, one who in every respect has been **tempted as we are...**

Temptation has two aspects:

- ▶ **Internal enticement [inward lusts]: James 1:14**, But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
- ▶ **External enticement [outward forces]: Matthew 4:1**, Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- ❖ **James 1:14** addresses inner, sinful passions, which Christ did not inherit. But Christ did face external temptations. And when Christ was externally tempted, **Hebrews 4:15** says “He was without sin.”

b) If Christ is God, how can His temptations be real? Could He have sinned?

Two problems: Undermining His sinlessness (he could have sinned) and His temptations (he was sinless and had no struggle).

Three factors to understand:

- 1. Christ’s nature was holy and sinless.**
 - ❖ **Hebrews 7:26**, For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21)
 - In his human flesh and blood, Christ did not inherit the sinful nature/adamic nature just as we do. He had no inner sinful passions. He was holy. That’s one reason His birth was a virgin birth, conceived by the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Christ’s temptations were authentic in His humanity (externally).**
 - ❖ **Hebrews 2:14**, Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself **likewise partook of the same things** [in every respect]...
 - ❖ **Hebrews 4:15**, one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are**

- ▶ Christ's divinity [fully God] did not diminish His humanity (temptations and struggles). As a human, Christ faced the full force of temptations just like us.

Wayne Grudem: Scripture clearly affirms that Jesus never committed sin (Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22). **It also affirms that His temptations were real, not just playacting.**

- ▶ Christ faced temptations from the devil.
- ▶ Christ faced temptations from people. [People trying to make Him King and Peter's persuasion to avoid the cross]
- ▶ Christ faced temptations to avoid suffering on the cross by his own human weakness (i.e. body not being capable to take excruciating pain on the cross).
- ❖ **Luke 22:44**, And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground.
- ❖ **Mark 14:35–36**, “He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me’”.
 - Christ's divinity did not alleviate His human struggles and temptations.

Steven Cole: In this, Christ was like Adam and Eve before the fall. Temptation had to come to Jesus from without, not from within.

3. Christ's victory over temptations was real in His humanity.

- ❖ **Hebrews 4:15**, one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin.**
- ▶ Christ was **like us** in flesh and blood. Christ was **like us** in facing temptations as we are. Christ was **unlike us** in living a life without sin.
- ▶ Christ faced temptations just as we face temptations (as a human) and He conquered temptations just as we must conquer temptations (as a human).

Wayne Grudem explains, “The moral strength of his divine nature was there as a sort of ‘backstop’ that would have prevented him from sinning..., but he did not rely on the strength of his divine nature to make it easier for him to face temptations...”.

Where did Christ run in His temptation? Hebrews 5:7, In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, **with loud cries and tears**, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

- ▶ Although Christ was divine, He fought against temptations as a human—depending on the Father and fighting against temptations.

- ▶ **What is the Father saving Christ from death? Acts 2:31-32**, “he [Christ] was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.
- ❖ **Hebrews 5:8-9**, Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered**. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...

Christ being made perfect? In His humanity, Christ learned and manifested perfect obedience under suffering and became the perfect source of salvation to His people. TRUE OBEDIENCE IS LEARNED UNDER SUFFERING, NOT APART FROM IT.