

Christ Our High Priest

Hebrews 2:16-18

17 July 2022

Halifax, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Please turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 2.

- Over the last few weeks, we have seen in Hebrews that it was necessary for God the Son to become a man and to suffer and die if He was going to save us.
- The Jews (Hebrews) who accepted Jesus as their Saviour were ridiculed and mocked by their fellow Hebrews for following such a Saviour:
 - “What kind of Messiah is this? A Messiah who dies on the cross!”
 - Jesus’ followers were under constant pressure to reject Him.
- But the author to the Hebrews is showing that it was a glorious thing for the Son of God to become flesh and die.
 - As God who became man, He has restored dominion over all things for man.
 - As God who became man, He is able to represent us before God and die to atone for our sins.
 - As God who became man, He was able to deliver us from the power of Satan and to take away the sting of death so that death is no longer the doorway to hell but to heaven for all who believe.
- Until He became a man, He could do none of these things.

Today, we come to yet another reason that it was necessary for Him to become a man—one that we often do not think about as much as we should...

- That He, being a man who was tempted, might be able to help us when we are tempted.
- Listen now as I read the passage that speaks about this, the passage that I will be preaching from today—
 - I will begin with Hebrews 2:16 (which we included last week) and read to the end of the chapter.
 - Here is the word of God:

Heb 2:16-18: For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High

Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

May the Lord add His blessing the reading and preaching of His word.

Look at the last verse I read (v. 18).

- It tells us that Jesus “is able to help those who are tempted.”
- As I said in the introduction, this passage shows us an additional way that He helps us as the Son of God who became true human flesh.
 - This is a way of help that we too often ignore when we are tempted.

Let's begin by looking at the need that is identified here:

I. You need help when you are tempted.

A. You are tempted when you don't want to do what God wants. This makes it hard to do what He wants.

1. There are the obvious kind of temptations that arise from our sinful desires.
 - Maybe you are tempted to gluttony, drunkenness, pornography, laziness, gossip, anger, boasting, neglect of tithing and worship (either public or family).
 - Maybe you don't want to really submit to your husband or really take responsibility as a husband.
 - We could go on and on—you know all about being tempted.
2. Sometimes, what you are tempted by is not in itself sinful.
 - Your mother tells you to clean your room and you want to go out and play.
 - It is not sinful to want to go out and play, but it is sinful if you do not obey your mother.
 - Or maybe you need to confront someone about their sin, and you don't want to do that.
 - It's not wrong that you don't want to create an awkward situation and make others uncomfortable, but it is wrong if you don't confront your brother.
 - In the original language of the Bible, the same word is used for both trials and temptations.
 - This stressed the point that both are forms of temptation because they involve things that God has given us to do that we don't want to do.
3. There is temptation simply from hard things that God brings into our lives.
 - Deep down, we know that nothing comes into our life apart from Him.
 - That means that when hard things come, we are tempted to turn away from God.
 - Think of Job.
 - It was right that he did not want his children to die, his property to be destroyed, and his body to be struck with a loathsome disease.
 - It would have been wrong for him to want those things.
 - But God sent those things to tempt or test him—to see if Job would turn against God because of them.
 - Many unbelievers will tell you that their real reason for rejecting God is because He created a world that is full of pain and suffering—whether He created it that way to start with or it became that way later does not matter to them—the problem is that it is that way now.
 - They argue that this world with sin and misery proves that there is no one good to govern it.
 - They cannot accept the fact that God has His reasons for running the world the way that He does, and that He does not need to consult anyone.

- He has told us that He is not the author of sin—He did not create us as sinful beings, but He did create us so that we were capable of sin and He also tested us even knowing that we would fail.
 - He did not entice us to sin, but He put us into a situation where we were tempted to sin—and we did.
 - Who are you to hold that against God?
 - He chose to run the world that way and that is His prerogative.
- B. As believers, we know what it is (and how difficult it can be) to be tempted.
1. The Hebrew Christians to whom Paul wrote were struggling with temptation because following Jesus is hard.
 - Following Him had made their lives much more difficult than they had been before.
 - They wanted to get along with their community that they had been a part of so long. They wanted to get along with their families—of course—and they wanted to keep their jobs and be able to support their families, and they did not want to be arrested, beaten, or put in prison.
 - But by following Jesus, they were troubled by all of these things.
 - This made them tempted to stop following Jesus—or at least to tone down their zeal for Him and return to some of the Old Testament rituals.
 2. We have seen people in our congregation decided that they would no longer follow Jesus.
 - It is very sad—they gave in to the temptation to turn away from Him.
 - Some are bitter, some are enticed by their sinful lusts, some are weary of the rejection that comes from the world when we follow Jesus, some don't want the responsibility of following Him...
 - If they really had known Jesus in a saving way, they would not be able to utterly reject Him. Some of them may return...and we will welcome them.
 3. But we all know the pressure of temptation and how it can pull us away from what God wants us to do.
 - We face it every day.
 - Certainly, if we are in Christ, we don't utterly reject Him, but giving way to temptation can certainly cripple our walk. It can cause us to lose our children to the world; it can ruin our marriages, it can bring us under God's chastening hand, it hinders other believers, it sets a bad example to others, it gives unbelievers a reason to mock, it prevents us from growing in grace and comfort, it destroys our Christian joy and assurance.
 - Brothers and sisters, we are in a constant battle.
 - We need help in our temptations.
 - The danger is very real.
 - The truth is, we would all be completely swallowed up by temptation if Jesus did not constantly help us.

II. As our High Priest, Jesus is beautifully equipped to help us when we are tempted.

- Let's look at that now.

A. First of all, He is equipped to help us because He is the one who propitiated God.

1. At the end of verse 17 it says that He made propitiation for the sins of the people.
 - The word that is translated *propitiation* is a very distinct word that means to appease someone who is angry.
 - The Bible teaches that God is angry with the wicked every day.
 - It teaches us that unless we come to Christ, we will be cast into the Lake of Fire forever and ever with the Devil.
 - This book of Hebrews will later speak of God's wrath and fiery indignation and will describe Him as a consuming fire.
 - His wrath is not an angry flare up, but a display of His holy justice and indignation against sin.
 - As we have seen in previous weeks, and as it says right here in Hebrews 2:17, Jesus became like us (a human) in order that He might be our High Priest who makes propitiation for our sins.
 - Jesus Himself endured the wrath and indignation of God for our sins when He went to the cross.
 - God's anger was turned away from us and upon Him when He was sacrificed.
 - The Bible says that He became sin for us—that all our iniquities were laid on Him.
 - There are a lot of squishy theologians and expositors who refuse to accept the Bible's clear teaching that God is angry with sinners.
 - Often, this word *propitiation* gets mistranslated by them.
 - But these compromising teachers leave us without the comfort that we need of a Saviour who has borne the wrath of God for us—who was cut off because of our sins, and by whose stripes we are healed.
 - How can anyone receive the comfort that God gives to believers if they do never admit that He is angry with us for our sin?
 - How they know the comfort of a passage like Isaiah 12:1 where it says, **“O LORD, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”**
 - Or Numbers 16:46-48 where God in His anger had sent a plague among the people so that they were dropping dead.
 - Think about being there and seeing people in the crowd being wiped out by a wave of death wiping out each one in its path.
 - But then we read: **So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement [that's our word—propitiation] for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has**

begun.”⁴⁷ Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.⁴⁸ And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

- What good news that Jesus as our High Priest makes propitiation to God for our sins!
 - Instead of denying the holy anger of God, the gospel teaches us how God graciously deals with His anger through Jesus.
- 2. But how does it help us to know that Jesus propitiated God help us in our trials?
 - a. It helps to know that as those who have trusted in Jesus, our trials are no longer an expression of God’s rejection of us!
 - That Jesus turned away the wrath of God from us is the foundation of our comfort.
 - The Lord is not against us if we are in Christ because Jesus has turned away His anger from us.
 - It assures us that even when He is chastening us for our sins, He is doing it not as an angry judge and as a foretaste of the wrath that is to come,
 - but as a loving father to correct us and turn us back to Himself.
 - And it assures us, that even when we are tested like Job was, it is not because He is angry with us, but because He has a gracious plan that we may not fully understand.
 - Like Job, we can say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”
 - Job knew that the outcome would be good—that he would be raised and vindicated.
 - He knew that God was reconciled to him through the blood of the covenant and that God’s purpose was not wrath but blessing.
 - Job knew that even though all he had was shadows of what Christ would do through the Old Testament appointed sacrifices and promises, but we now have Christ crucified to see how God’s wrath has been turned away.
 - How can we turn away from God when He has been reconciled to us through the blood of Jesus?
 - We know that His plans are for our good.
 - He told us that we would have to suffer much tribulation to enter His kingdom.
 - But what about the kind of temptation that comes from something like pornography or the temptation to get into an illicit affair? Or just the temptation to goof off when you are at work—or when you had planned to pray and read the word?
 - How does Jesus’ propitiation of the God help with that kind of temptation?

- b. Knowing of His propitiation enables you to recognise that it is much better to follow God than it is to follow some stupid sinful lust.
 - You see from Jesus' example that even when the trials were severe, that outcome of following the Lord was far better than rejecting Him.
 - You say with Joseph, "How can I do this great sin against God?"
 - You say with Asaph, "How foolish and ignorant I have been to think of forsaking God for this!"
 - We realise that our relationship with God is better than whatever it is that we want to reject Him for.
 - When we remember what Jesus did to atone for our sins, it puts us back into our right mind.
- c. Seeing how God has given us His Son to turn away His wrath also silences any questions about the goodness of God when trials come.
 - We certainly do doubt His goodness when trials are severe, but we have no cause to question it when we remember what He had done to save us!

TRANS> So Jesus is uniquely qualified to help us in our temptations because He has turned away the wrath of God for us and that is the foundation of our trust in our trials.

- But there is another way that He is uniquely qualified to help us through His sufferings.

B. Second, He is uniquely equipped to help us in temptation because He suffered from temptation more than any of us will ever have to suffer.

1. You think it is hard to bear with your temptations? perhaps you have cancer, perhaps you are constantly tempted by some sin that you are addicted to...
 - And you say, "Nobody understands how hard it is for me."
 - Have you ever thought that or said that?
2. I am here to tell you that Jesus fully understands how hard temptation is for us.
 - We have no idea how repulsive it was to Him, a perfect man, to bear the shame and guilt of our sin on the cross—to be cut off by the Father.
 - Yet, that is what the Father asked Him to do and what He agreed to do when He agreed to be our High Priest.
 - He wanted to do it in order to save us.
 - He wanted to do it to glorify the Father.
 - But the thing itself was harder to do than it would be for any crack addict to turn away from his crack, or for any porn addict to turn from his porn, or any suffering person (like Job) to continue trusting God in suffering.
 - Jesus' whole life was a great temptation.
 - John Brown says:
 - "He was exposed to every variety of suffering to which innocent human nature could be exposed. He speaks of His whole life as one scene of trial: 'Ye have continued with Me in My temptation'—during My trial.

Poverty, reproach, hunger, thirst, weariness, pain even to agony, unkind treatment from relations and friends, temptation in the strict sense of the term, especially from the great enemy of God and man, and the loss of the delights arising from sensible communion with His Father,— these are some of the things in which: ‘He suffered being tried.’ Now in all these things, wherein ‘He suffered, being tried, He is able to succour those who are tried.’ ”

- There were times Satan really ramped his temptation up to full throttle.
 - Satan doesn’t have to do that with us because we give in way sooner.
 - Jesus was in such agony facing the cross that He began to sweat blood when He was pleading that if possible, He would not have to do it.
 - But He did have to do it and He did do it—without wavering, without turning back.
 - We are the ones who do not know what it was like to be tempted to that extent! We have no idea.
 - He knows perfectly well what it is like for us—He has borne with temptations that were way stronger than any that you have borne—and that were far more difficult for Him than yours are for you.

3. And here is the best part of all.

- His temptations don’t make Him say, “Well what’s wrong with you? I had to deal with a lot more than you are.”
 - No. He is not like that.
 - His suffering makes Him come to us with tenderness and compassion, ready and eager to help us.
- Look at verse 17 and 18 together:
 - **Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**
 - Do you see what that is saying?
 - His suffering of temptation makes Him able to aid us—the word translated *aid* literally means to respond to our cry for help.
 - Because He loves us and because He knows what it is like to be in the place of temptation, instead of ridiculing us in our weakness, He rushes to our aid.
 - He actually became flesh and suffered with the intent that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.
 - It was part of God’s design that by becoming a man and suffering He would not only propitiate God’s wrath, but that He would also become a merciful and faithful high priest who is able to sympathise with and help us when we are tempted.
 - Consider the description of him here—*a merciful and faithful High Priest...*

- The word *mercy* is a word that refers to heat—the heat of affection and compassion, the tender mercy of a warm heart.
 - That is what Jesus is like when we are tempted.
 - There is a pity and a sorrow that move Him to action.
- And that is where the second word, *faithfulness* comes in.
 - His mercy and compassion for His people in temptation move Him to always come to our rescue. He is utterly faithful.
 - Did He not tell us that He would keep us and that nobody would be able to pluck us out of His hand?
 - He does not ignore us or pretend that He does not see us.
 - He comes to help us.
 - Are you aware of that? Did you know that? Do you think about that when you are tempted?
- I tell you that He does help us—all the time—even when we don't acknowledge Him and even when we spurn His help.
 - I tell you, if He didn't help us in our temptations, we would have all turned away long ago.
 - Not one of us would have continued in the faith.
 - Do we not see that in those who never knew Him?
 - As Jesus said, they continue for a while, but then turn away.
 - We who are His brethren, His children, the heirs of salvation, are kept by the power of God through faith.
 - He who keeps us never slumbers nor sleeps.
 - Comforting us and keeping us is His constant work.

TRANS> So I have told you that He helps us in our temptations...

III. Now let's consider this help in our daily temptations.

- First, at what His help looks like—what He does to help us in the hour of temptation...
 - And second, at how we can best receive His help.
- A. So what does His help look like in the time of temptation? How does He actually help us?
1. First, He has fellowship with us in our sufferings.
 - The Bible says that in all our afflictions He is afflicted.
 - In other words, He sympathises with us and actually suffers with us—He weeps with us.
 - It is very encouraging to have someone share in the same sufferings that you experience, and His memory is such that He is able to do just that.
 - Paul says that he rejoices in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.
 - Suffering helped him to know and understand his Saviour better.

- It helped him to understand better what Jesus went through when He had to keep going when it was the last thing He wanted to do.
 - There is the encouragement of knowing that Jesus did not give up—it motivates you to press on like He did.
 - He never forgot that serving God is what we are here for—nothing else.
 - This is where we find the true happiness that we desire—we only bring sorrow in our lives when we don't wholly follow our Lord.
 - We remember in our sufferings how His sufferings turned out...
 - Bringing salvation to us, honour to Him, and glory to His Father...
 - And that encourages us to press on with Jesus.
2. Second, He intercedes for us.
- It is always an encouragement to know of our brothers and sisters praying for us in our temptation... how much more to know that Jesus, our merciful and faithful His priest, prays for us!
 - We have an example of this with Peter where He tells Peter that though he will deny Him three times, He has prayed that His faith will not fail.
 - He ever lives to make intercession for us.
 - Take that to heart when you are under temptation. He is praying for you.
3. Third, He uses His Word and Spirit to help us in our temptations.
- In His word, He has given us promises that He will be with us, that our trials will bring good, that He will not afflict us beyond what we are able, that He does not afflict us willingly—only when, like the cross, it is somehow necessary.
 - His Spirit causes us to receive and understand these promises when we are in trial. Often these promises keep us from yielding to temptation.
 - In addition to that are the warnings in the word—that tell us of the sorrow we will have, of the trouble we will bring to ourselves and others—if we yield to temptation.
 - The Spirit opens our hearts to receive these warnings.
 - Jesus gives us Psalms in which His trust in the Father is expressed in the face of trials and temptations—where there is struggle, but also trust in God that His way is the good way and the path to blessing.
 - We are able to walk with Him through the words of the psalms.
 - He gives us praises in the Bible that speak of His Father's goodness, wisdom, sovereignty, mercy, holiness, justice, love, power.
 - What a help that is in our temptations.
 - In His providence, He brings His word to us in marvellous ways...
 - Causing us to remember certain verses...

- Sending a friend with a word in the time of need...a dear spouse or friend that He uses to encourage us, an elder, a neighbour, something we read at random or in our devotions.
 - Exposing us to what we need in the ministry of the word at church whether in our praises or our prayers, at the Table, or through the sermon.
 - Be sure that you receive encouragements in the time of temptation.
 - Often in the very moment of a strong temptation, there will be a promise or a reminder or warning that will come to you—embrace it that you might overcome.
4. Fourth, He helps us in our trials by limiting them, regulating them, designing them to be just what we need.
- There is a sweet passage in Judges 10:16 where we are told that the LORD, chastening His people, could no longer endure the misery of Israel.
 - He had to relieve them because He could not bear to see them continue to suffer.
 - We saw that in the Song of Solomon—where Jesus had withdrawn the sense of His presence to chasten us, but was overcome by our cries to Him and had to make Himself known to us—had to come to us.
 - He not only relieves us when the right time comes, He also prepares us for the trials that we face.
 - When He brought Israel through the wilderness, He did not at first bring them to face war—He led them in a way that they could first learn to trust Him and then He had them face enemies.
 - How it helps to know this in your temptations.
 - He is regulating them through His tender mercies.
- B. How do you avail yourself of His help in your temptations?
1. Remember that He is a merciful and faithful High Priest who is eager to help you.
 - Enter into fellowship with Him in His sufferings, thinking of what He endured for you and of how He pressed on, doing the will of God.
 2. Ask Him to help you—
 - Remember what we saw in Judges and the Song of Solomon—that He is overcome by our cries for relief.
 - But don't just ask Him to remove the trial—ask Him to give you the strength to bear it without giving in to the temptation.
 - Ask Him to comfort you and give you assurance that though He was angry, His anger is turned away because He has turned away God's wrath.
 3. Meditate on His word—on the promises, the warnings, the praises and expressions of trust in the Psalms and other places.
 4. Look to others for help—don't isolate yourself.

- Don't be embarrassed to tell your brothers and sisters of your struggle and ask them to help you. Go to your spouse. Go to your parents, Go to an elder or to the pastor and get help.
5. And be assured that even when you have failed to seek Him, He will still be faithful to you and will keep you from utter apostasy if you are truly His.
- C. And by all means, point each other to Christ in your afflictions.
- Tell each other how He has helped you.
 - Remind a brother you see in temptation that Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest who has suffered temptation and is eager to help us.
 - Point that brother to the promises, to the testimonies of God's goodness and faithfulness, to the dangers of turning from Him.
 - Comfort him in Christ who has suffered and has taken away God's wrath.
 - And pray with and for each other!

Conclusion: What an excellent Saviour we have!

- The Son of God was made flesh—
 - first that He might bear God's wrath for us, and
 - second that He might help us when we are tempted.
- See that you do not turn from His way when you are tested...
 - Turn rather to your merciful and faithful High Priest.
 - He will never chide you when you do that.
 - He will always help you.