

JESUS FACING TEMPTATION AND GROWING IN OBEDIENCE AS A MAN

Bruce A Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

I. Introduction – the fullness of Jesus’ full human likeness to ours is seen, in significant part, in how he resisted temptation, and in the growth he experienced in his own faith and trust in his Father. Just how did Jesus resist temptation? And how is it possible that he grew in obedience and faith?

II. Jesus’ Impeccability, Temptations, and Sinlessness

A. The Problem Faced with the Orthodox Doctrine of the Impeccability of Christ

B. Features of Jesus’ Life that must be accounted for in relation to temptation and sin

1. Jesus was really and truly tempted – Luke 4:1-13; Heb 4:15
2. Jesus was fully sinless (i.e., he “did not” sin) – 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:21-23
3. Jesus was impeccable (i.e., he “could not” sin) – Luke 1:35; Heb 1:10-12; 13:8

C. Explaining the reality of Jesus’ temptations in light of his impeccability. Three considerations:

1. He was really tempted “in all things as we are” (Heb 4:15). This cannot be jeopardized.
2. Because he never succumbed to temptation, he experienced its full force
3. Distinction: Why Christ *could not* sin, and why Christ *did not* sin.
Illustration: swimmer and boat

III. Jesus’ Growth and Maturity in Faith

Seeing this helps explain some things that otherwise are quite puzzling, to be sure. Consider for example, the following statements about Jesus:

Hebrews 5:8-9 – ⁸ Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.
⁹ And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.

IV. Jesus Promises that His Followers will receive the same Spirit who has been and is on Him so we, too, can live lives of Spirit-empowered, new covenant, obedience (cf. Ezek 36:25-27)

John 7:37-39 – ³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 14:15-17 – ¹⁵“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. ¹⁶“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

John 15:26-27 – ²⁶“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, ²⁷ and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

John 16:5-15 – ⁵“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹²“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴“He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵“All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

V. Relation of the Divine and Human Natures in how Jesus lived His life

A. Clear expressions of the Deity of Christ in His Life and Ministry

Forgiveness of sin (e.g., Mark 2:1-12 — see esp. v. 7); control over nature (e.g., Matt 14:22-33); claims of Christ to deity (e.g., John 8:58; 10:30); His eternal relation w/ the Father (e.g., John 17:5; 24).

B. Question of Miracles — By His divine nature, or in His humanity in the power of the Spirit? We should recall these two key texts:

Matthew 12:28 – “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Acts 10:38 – “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

VI. Conclusion

Jesus’ life, ministry, miracles, obedience, resisting temptation, and accomplishing the mission which the Father sent him to accomplish – all this was done in the power of the Spirit. Jesus, then, is the epitome of the new covenant person, living in the power of the Spirit. And as he has now given us his Spirit, we are called to live lives modeled after him. Indeed, we are called to follow in his steps (1 Pet 2:21) and live new covenant lives that bring honor and glory to Christ, by the power of the Spirit.