

Tempted Like As We Are

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[0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 4 we read at verse 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.

It's not easy for us to get our heads around the idea of the Lord Jesus having been tempted in all points like as we are. We tend to think that our particular temptations are a symptom or a factor of our own character and our own particular shall we say leanings toward particular this sin or that sin. We all have our different weaknesses we all have our particular guilty secrets we might say and because of these things we tend to think that Christ's temptations must have been somehow more pure than ours and less bad than ours and on a higher level than ours and surely he couldn't really have been tempted with the kind of things that we are tempted by.

Well perhaps not with the individual particular sins our particular temptations our particular weaknesses and perhaps sins of which we have been guilty in the past but which we have sought and received forgiveness and yet the devil will use those old sins and turn our thoughts back to them and cause them to think oh that was good wasn't it oh remember what you did this remember when you did such and such thing no but that was wrong ah yeah but you really enjoyed it at the time didn't you and to try and drag you back into old sins or particular failings or weaknesses we just we find it so hard to think Christ who ever have been tempted really like as we are.

But as we say although the individual temptations and perhaps reminders of the individual sins of which we ourselves are guilty will not necessarily be the same each particular to which Christ himself was subjected by way of temptation yet there will be the same principles and there will have been the same intensity and there will be the same kind of things by which Christ was tempted.

Now of course we don't have details of every occasion on which the evil one tempted our Lord it would be foolish I think for us to think that the temptation in the wilderness was the only time when Jesus was really subjected to serious temptation from the evil one.

[2 : 3 4] You know it's not for nothing that Luke 4 tells us at verse 13 when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season. But it doesn't suggest or I would say it doesn't suggest to you that therefore the rest of the time until he's hanging on the cross and there's the temptation to come down from it and so on or the temptation gets sent until that he's pretty much left untouched.

I don't imagine he is left untouched but I imagine that he is able to resist all these temptations with far greater strength than when he was at his physical weakest until the time of the cross and he was at his physical weakest at the time of the temptation in the wilderness.

This high priest of ours then who goes before us entering into the veil as it were going before us into the throne room of his father interceding for his people offering up that perfect sacrifice not of animals and sheep and goats but of himself is not such as cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but he was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

So although the temptation in the wilderness is in a sense incomplete as far as an account of all of Christ's temptations it is the most that we have to go on so I would suggest that perhaps it might be of benefit to us to look at that occasion.

We have the most detailed accounts are both in Matthew chapter 4 and in Luke chapter 4. Mark makes a fleeting reference to the temptation in the wilderness in chapter 1 verses 12 and 13 after his baptism immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness and he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan and was with the wild beasts and the angels ministered unto him.

[4 : 29] Now that would rather suggest the angels ministered unto him sort of at the end when he had come through the temptation it wouldn't be much of a temptation if you've got angels constantly supplying your every need as you go along but I think it's rather as Matthew puts it the devil leavers him and behold angels came and ministered unto him.

They supplied perhaps replenishment of whether they could give spiritual strength whether they could supply needs in whatever way we don't know but they waited upon him they ministered to him and we do read that after he had resisted successfully all the temptations of the evil one that as Luke puts us Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee and they went out of fame of him through all the region round about.

He was therefore the stronger for having been tried tempted, tested and come through it and this is probably part of the thing that most of us don't get with regard to temptation.

Most of us probably think of the temptations that we endure as a sign of our being bad people our being very very bad Christians and of being very poor specimens of followers of Jesus otherwise surely we wouldn't be kept in these weeks surely we must be very very worthless or else these things wouldn't be even suggesting themselves to us and so we must be bad and so even if we come through even we don't give in to the particular temptation we come out feeling barred and bruised and wounded like a soldier after he's been through a battle maybe he's wounded he's bleeding he's weak he's limping and he just feels oh we'll be for anything just now.

but rather how his commanding officer will see it is there is one of my veterans he would suit the attacks of the enemy he fought off all the attacks of the enemy and he is still standing yes he's walking wounded but he's still standing the soldier himself may think oh good for nothing now look at all bleeding everywhere I'm limping I'm wounding I'm out of ammunition I've lost half my equipment but rather he feels himself no use for anything now his commanding officer may be proud of it for all that he has done we see temptation as in itself a mark of failure most of us probably now if we give in to it we feel even worse if we resist it we still feel pretty miserable because you've got the lack of if we can use the word satisfaction I don't mean that in a positive sense but the desire to give in to temptation the desire to give in and to just let it take over us if we cave in to that we feel worthless after it but if we resist it and fight it off we just feel miserable for all the promise that we weren't able to sort of actually taste and enjoy in inverted commas and I do that so either way we come out of it feeling battered and bruised and useless one way or another but this is not how we ought to be temptation when it comes to us comes to us because we are followers of Christ those who are in complete spiritual deadness are not troubled with temptation they want something they just do it you know like a dog on heat or if it's hungry it eats or if it needs to relieve its bodily self it just does so or if it feels a particular urge coming it just satisfies it it's a dog on heat an animal without a spirit without a soul in that sense just behaves a certain way and the worldling is not troubled by temptation as such but those with whom there is this striving within the spirit against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit and so on they are troubled by temptation because this is what happened to Jesus and this is what it was like for Christ that his people are going to be like him if he went through it they are going to go through it he resisted it all in the knowledge that all of them probably wouldn't resist it all most of them all of them would not resist it because we fail we sin but we are not a 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 and if we can look briefly it may help you to put your finger in the two places the chief places anyway

[9 : 03] Matthew 4 and Luke 4 the opening verses 1 to 11 in Matthew and Luke 1 to 13 if that's what helped you but we'll see that there are three main areas in which Jesus is tempted the first is the immediate physical need he has been fasting 40 days he's hungry and the temptation of the devil and this is both Matthew and Luke are consistent in this being the opening temptation make these stones command these stones that they may become bread the devil said to him Luke 4 verse 3 if thou be the son of God command this stone that it be made bread Jesus answered him saying it is written that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God and likewise in Matthew's account of course there is the devil saying if you really are the son of God if thou be the son of God command these stones to be bread there is the first temptation Jesus being so weak with hunger after all this time of fasting and no doubt part of the fasting is in order to weaken to depress the strength of the body or to give the spirit command over the flesh and part of it no doubt for all the reasons for why we have fasted quite so long these things are beyond us but the fact is he was physically unhungered physically weak and there is the temptation well the devil suggesting it to him you are the son of God surely that means all of nature is at your disposal and your power is at your disposal you can make it bread you've got that power which he did have that power you can command it which he could command it you can make it bread which he could make it bread you can eat come on you're hungry you can just imagine all the modern politically correct ones saying now

God doesn't want you to suffer God doesn't want you to be hungry God has made all the food in the world God has put everything at your disposal here you are with the power to make bread I mean if you don't make this stone bread it just means that when you go back down into the valley or down into Galilee you're going to have to eat bread somebody else has made you're going to be taking it out of the mouth of somebody else that's not a good thing to do is it you're going to make somebody else go hungry when you've got the power to make this bread yourself come on who do you think you're from come on just make a bread just do it it's so easy just go mad and you can satisfy your hunger come on of course you're hungry you've been fasting 40 days in the desert and so on so all the plausible suggestions of the evil one all the rationalizing of it why shouldn't you do this you're entitled to it you're hungry God doesn't want you to suffer God doesn't want you to be hungry come on you've proved it now 40 days 40 nights who could ask for more you're entitled to giving away but you'll notice with temptation if you're experienced in it and all of us have experienced whether or not we actually think about it much we've all endured temptation and probably not very successfully is that you can resist temptation nine times in a row and you might think well I've beaten it that's okay

I'm the strong one now I've said no this time and I've said no that time and I've resisted this and resisted that and then the tenth time the devil will come in and get you now if you can think of let's say somebody who has an addiction and maybe they resist say the drink or the syringe or whatever it may be in nine times out of ten they resisted and the tenth time they give in and the devil has got them there and the number of times you know if Joseph in Potiphar's house had resisted all the times that Potiphar's wife made these suggestions to and yet he gave in the final time then the whole incident wouldn't even be recorded it would simply be another young man who gives in to the normal temptations of another young man when the opportunity of a young man's life when the temptations are there and when the opportunity is there he just gave in there isn't a story there isn't an account because he didn't resist oh he may have resisted all the other times but the time he gave in was a time that mattered you see it's not enough nine times out of ten it's not enough that all the times

Judas may have thought of betraying Jesus and then the final time that he did it and he thought okay I'll make a little money out of this I'll gain a little bit and when he did it when he knew he had betrayed innocent blood well yes you've got what you promised there's his little bag of coins checking away in his hand he could turn them out of his hand he could count out the third and think well what is this at the end of the day Jesus said what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul we'll come back to that but the first temptation body it is the immediate needs we might say of the flesh the trouble is if you say the flesh nowadays people automatically think of sexual sin now this what Jesus is being tempted with is not a sin it's not a sin to eat it's not a sin to be hungry what would be the sin would be satisfying the legitimate need by an illegitimate means in the fullness of time we read

Joseph for example he gave him Asenath the daughter of Potiphar the priest of Orme to wife and with her he had children and so on a full normal marital relationship life that was fine that was legitimate Potiphar's wife would not have been one is illegitimate the other is sanctified you see it's not the act itself that is wrong it's the circumstances in which the devil tempts you to satisfy that need the temptation Jesus exposed to is not eat as though eating is bad it's the manner by which he was being tempted to satisfy that legitimate immediate need and the devil will come to us different ways different things that which is of as I say if we see the flesh people tend to mean sexual nowadays that's not what we're talking about when we say the flesh means the body the needs of the body to eat to drink to have the warmth the comfort the shelter the things which are so important to our survival obviously but as Jesus said here in the

[15 : 42] Sermon on the Mount don't get hung up on these things what you'll eat what you'll drink what you'll wear after these things the nations of the world the Gentiles seek people who don't know any better who don't know God they seek only these material things your heavenly father knows that you have need of them and he will supply them and seek ye first the kingdom of God the temptation will be in the first instance to the body to the flesh to the me myself I we could say that's the body the spirit the world of the different levels of temptations we could say it's the flesh we could say it's the world of work or we could say it's just the world of the legacy we're leaving or we could say it's personal and then professional and then spiritual but the personal is the first attack and Jesus says it is written man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord of the Lord doth man live the words that come out of the mouth of the Lord remember what Jesus himself said in John 6 when he said the words that I speak unto you it is the spirit that quickeneth that it brings alive the flesh governeth nothing the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life when Jesus speaks it is the spirit speaking through him when Jesus speaks there is life from his word because he is the father's son but the first attack is on the body of the flesh we might say that the second attack is upon the spirit or rather upon you know the desire to do the right thing but to do it the wrong way we could say that if we are looking beyond simply the flesh or the personal needs we could translate this into the world of work one's career one's ambition how are you getting out of the temptation of Jesus well remember that although

Matthew and Luke disagree slightly about the order in which these temptations come Matthew for example if we go back to Matthew's account Matthew goes from the issue about the bread then to the issue about throwing yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple because it's written you know he will not allow you to dash your foot against the stone the angels will bear you up quoting there from Psalm 91 verses 11 and 12 the devil starts quoting scripture about them and then the temptation to all the kingdoms of the world will I give you and shows them all in an instant if you'll fall down and worship me Luke goes in a slightly different order Luke goes with all the kingdoms of the world first and finally to throwing yourself down from the temple and it depends which way you think of the ascending power of the temptations Matthew is going on the basis that first of all there's the temptation to feed yourself by your legitimate means secondly there's the temptation to launch your career by throwing yourself from the pinnacle of the temple where all the pilgrims and the faithful will be gathered there they'll ooh and ah and they'll say wow see this guy and look angels bore him up he must be the messiah and they'll all flop to him and that's it job done mission accomplished the easy way and that's the temptation they do it by the means that the devil suggests you could just cut through all the red paper you could get job done no problem and that's it right there no crucifixion no suffering no hassle just easy peasy and that the temptation to deal with the work the job the calling that is in front of us by going for the easy quick fix

I realise that it's perhaps stretching things to compare the if we can use this vulgar term the career of Christ the messianic career the calling the vocation for which he had come to earth with our own sort of earthbound careers and world of work and so on but there is a certain legitimate correspondence if Christ is tempted in every way like as we are in every point like as we are was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin there is a sense in which temptations that afflict us with regard to our work or our career or whatever the temptation to cut the car to go for the quick fix to gain an illegitimate advantage to do the wrong thing for right reasons and to just get ahead by that illegitimate means because we'll gain such an advantage that temptation must have afflicted many people perhaps that particular temptation more men than women generally but because the temptation to get ahead of our colleagues and to gain the advantage and show our power and so on that is always there to cut fast to the winning ahead and to an extent that's kind of what

Jesus is being tempted with to gain a messianic mission to get it done to go ahead use your power what's it there for if not to set you ahead remember of course when we think of it the devil is now quoting scripture back to Jesus he starts by quoting scripture to the devil the devil quotes scripture back to him the devil knows his bible perfectly you know if you want to quote scripture to the devil he'll quote it back to him so it's not enough just to trade texts with the devil you've got to know the spirit and the meaning of what God is revealing here and the truth behind it the Lord is never simply going to put into our hands a means for a shortcut a quick fix on the glorifying of ourselves I found it almost breathtakingly unbelievable something that I clicked on the internet a so called evangelist's website and an individual not the evangelist himself but one obviously the so called ministry team was speaking about you know how you know though he was rich for our sakes he became poor so that you might become rich and was actually

I kid you not actually teaching that this meant that the Lord wanted his people to be financially prosperous God did not want you to be poor which of course he doesn't desire you to be poor but the sacrifice of Christ his suffering on the cross all that he went through was so that you could become bank rich cash rich and this was going to show you the step by step means of how to do this how to get cash rich and I just sat here absolutely breathtaking arrogance of this and could not believe that he was actually saying this out loud using the Lord's name using the Lord's word quoting his particular scriptures as though it simply boiled down to pound, shillings and pence but there are those who will push that and there are those who will map it up because when it comes to perhaps not the individual personal desires or the body or the flesh but perhaps the world and the career and the means of amassing money or perhaps getting ahead in our chosen particular profession

[23 : 22] Jesus' messiah calling is not simply like a worldly profession but there is a certain corresponding equivalence in the temptation the temptation to cut ahead to use the means you've got to gain that advantage and to cause everybody to flock to you get ahead achieve the job by illegitimate means you'll see in the gospel accounts that Jesus never once never once used his miraculous powers as a means of glorifying himself every miracle that he did was motivated by compassion by compassion for those who would otherwise be suffering the feeding of the five thousand because they were thinking with hunger after the time they had been following him the widow of Nain's son because he knew that she was herself bereft there was nobody to take care of her he restored this man to life up to him look everybody we'll be looking at that in due course when we turn again next to the resurrection cases and the case studies but Jesus doesn't you know when he heals the man at the pool of

Bethesda when he opens the eyes of the blind never once does he sound the trumpet before him or try to encourage him rather it is out of compassion for the meaty or the poor or the weak and the suffering that Jesus uses the power that is in his hand to bless the lives of others so we might say so we might say that this second kind of temptation is yes it's a spiritual temptation but it's perhaps with regard to the workplace perhaps with regard to the career or the progress we might make the third one if we take it perhaps in Matthew's order then that it is the temptation to all the kingdoms of the world will I give you now of course as far as Jesus is concerned he's already king of heaven and earth what does he want with the kingdoms of the world what can the devil possibly offer him I would suggest to you that what it means is that the devil is saying I will make all these kingdoms want you I will make them all love you I will make them all serve you you will be king of kings lord of lords they'll all bow the knee before king Jesus and you just say a word and I'll make them do it and they'll love you and they'll sell you and you'll have them all as your subjects and I will just compel them to do it and I've got that power and I think we would have to say the devil is not lying at that point because a certain amount of power has been put into his hand and there's the temptation the temptation being suggested to our lord is you can rule this world for good you can do it you can do it justly you'll be a benign king you won't be like the devil wants you to be you won't be a tyrant you won't be cruel you'll bring in a kingdom of righteousness you'll bring in a worthy messianic kingdom wouldn't it be so good if they would all just bow the knee now if they would all just acknowledge yes

Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah let's all bow down we've won kingdom after kingdom mission and confidence every race and tribe just bow the knee now to this Jesus of Nazareth what a temptation all the kingdoms of the world I'll give you but it means you have to use the means I suggest it means you have to use the devil's power and not the lord's spirit converting people one by one through the painful business of witness or rejection or martyrdom or suffering or crucifixion or resurrection all these things with the spirit overcoming all the temptations of the evil one that's hard work and very incomplete results come on I'll offer you something far more far more lasting far more completely surely that's what you want then if this were to translate into something that might be suggested to us we are not going to be in a position to rule all the kingdoms of the world but Jesus did say of course what shall it profit a man that he shall gain the whole world but lose his own soul whether or not we get ahead in our chosen profession whether or not we become masters of our particular calling or world of work or whatever the case may be beyond our individual self and bodily needs there is a temptation probably in every person to think what did my life amount to what sort of stamp or footprint will

I leave on the world now we know ourselves that those who become great men prime ministers or presidents or whatever do reach this sort of personal crisis point of what their legacy is going to be at the end of the day probably that matters an awful lot to them and almost nothing at all to everybody else in the whole world but the temptation is that we think what is my footprint going to be what is my legacy going to be when I am gone what will the world say about me how will I make my impact on the world how can I make some kind of splash in this world so that when people say my name they'll say oh yes remember so and so think of all the great things they achieve let's put up a statue let's call a library after them let's name a building or a street after them and so on and I can leave something of a legacy behind the world will know that I have been here and that may not be something that perhaps many of us have opportunity or perhaps even desire to have offered to us but that is a temptation that faces a great many people how do I make my mark so that people will remember me when

I am gone this I will suggest to you is of the nature of what is offered to Jesus I can give you the world I can give you all the world bowing down to you I can give you not just the top of your career I can give you everything this world has to offer thing is what this world has to offer of course is passing away and even if you get it you know Judas you could say in a sense he wasn't cheated he contracted with them for 30 pieces of silver and you can just imagine him looking at it in his hand and thinking you know what was it worth it I count them out I cheap the money in my hand and what is it amount to well it is exactly what you got it's 30 pieces of silver what are you going to do with that you do nothing with it he couldn't turn the clock back he couldn't he couldn't buy anything with he threw it down in the temple inside the trade and it's in blood and he said what is that to us you see to that and that is what you are to the devil you are just an empty packet when the product has been removed to be splunched up and thrown aside that is what we are to him you see the reason we undergo temptation is not because we are so evil it is because evil has its sights upon you and the only reason that evil has its sights upon you is because it perceives you to be a threat you might think well I'm no threat come on I'm not exactly the world's greatest Christian

[31 : 19] I'm not exactly especially spiritual or a giant wreck I could just be squashed out like a bug any minute why does the devil even bother with me well I would suggest to you with all due respect that you and I we are just bugs who could be squashed out any minute but that which resides within every son and daughter of the king that which is within them which is planted by his grace that is not so readily extinguishable that is not so easily snuffed out because that is divine the seed that he has placed within in the heart the spirit the soul of every single one of his sons and daughters that the devil desires to extinguish and he knows he cannot extinguish the flame of that spirit therefore he must do everything he can to get the individual to smother it get them to give in to the temptation get them to be weak to fall to fail time and again until eventually they say I cannot possibly be a child of God to extinguish the flame themselves to turn away to deny it the oxygen of keeping on being nurtured and fair in their relationship with the Lord the devil does not have the power to extinguish the flame of the spirit in your heart but what he desires to do is to make you do it to make you snuff it out to make you turn away to make you leave that light outside and go off into the darkness and to do that he has to make you think there is no hope and to do that he suggests to you every conceivable manner of temptation which he hopes and desires and intends that you will give into somewhere along the line or that just by being battered so much by it you will think well if I was half a Christian

I wouldn't even have been tempted in this way wrong it is because the light flickers within you that the devil hones in on you to seek to tempt to test to twist to destroy the vulnerable the vulnerable weak and fragile Christian men and women and boys and girls who otherwise will escape his clutches temptation is the most powerful weapon in his armory but grace is more powerful still we could preach another whole sermon right now on the whole armour of God and how to resist it but for now let us be content to recognise that in undergoing temptation it is not because you are bad it is not because you are evil Christ himself is subjected to temptation of the most intense kind of his personal flesh of his if we can say it reverently career prospects of the opportunity to change the world and to do it for good but to do it by evil means all of these things are suggested to him and this is the most subtle temptations of all that the devil will use to try to pretend to you that what he is saying is a good thing it's a good object it's a good goal it's a good intention and target it's just the means by which he suggests you do it will be playing right into his hands you are tempted because you belong to

Christ but it is precisely because you belong to Christ that you have the power to resist and to overcome not in your own strength the weapon and the only weapon in the armor of God is the sword of the spirit which is the word of God what did we read earlier the word of God is quick and is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing evil to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is in serving of the thoughts and intents of the heart the word of God already knows what you are thinking already knows what you are tempted with how many times have you turned up seemingly a random page and the verse of the line has spoken exactly to your situation because it is a living word it is quick and sharp and powerful and it goes straight to the heart of the matter do you think it is for nothing that when

Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil he quoted scripture again and again and again and the devil may quote scripture back at you but if you know the one who is the author of it then you will resist not in your feeble power but in his omnipotence and friend yes the battle will be sore and you will come out of it battered you will come out of it bruised and bleeding and wounded but it is precisely the wounded and experienced veterans who are used of their commanding officer when the next phase of fresh faced young recruits eager and intense for the fray but having no experience at all of what the reality of battle is like that you will be able to shepherd and lead and guide them and to be of use to them as others have been of use to you seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens

Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our profession for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but it was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin let us pray prayed 2 5 times to■■■ going too