

Jesus Was Tempted, But Didn't Sin

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It seems that there used to be a time when people had heroes, and that those heroes could do no wrong. But we live in an age when everything is scrutinized, and all kinds of secrets about famous people—politicians, athletes, entertainers—are revealed. The more media coverage a person gets, the worse that person looks, or so it would seem.

I don't think most of us would like to live our lives under such scrutiny. If we're honest, we must admit that there's something wrong with each of us. All of us. We all fail to live up to our standards. Other people fail to live up to our standards. And we certainly fail to live up to the standards we find in the Bible. Sometimes, when we're being pessimistic, it seems as if the human race is totally messed up, beyond repair. Much of the news is devoted to stories of how people steal, abuse, cheat, and murder. Every year, without fail, people act in awful ways toward each other. We are proud, selfish, greedy, lusting, lying, destructive, and hurtful. Every year, there are wars, murders, thefts, lies, and acts of adultery.

Will this streak be broken? Can it be? Is there anyone who hasn't failed, who hasn't let us down?

The Bible tells us that there is one, and his name is Jesus. Today, as we continue to think through the question, "Who is Jesus?" we'll see that Jesus was tempted as we are, yet he didn't sin.

In order to understand the importance of what Jesus has done, we have to think a bit about human nature. The first chapter of the Bible tells us that God made humans in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26–27) and he made them good (Gen. 1:31). What does it mean to be made in the image and likeness of God? It's debated by many theologians, but if you look at what those phrases meant in the ancient Near East at the time Genesis was written, it seems that "likeness" refers to the way that men and women relate to God, as children, and "image" refers to the way men and women are supposed to represent God in the world he has made.¹

¹ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 184-202. Gentry further explains: "Man is the divine image. As servant king and son of God mankind will mediate God's rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and the earth on the other" (201, original emphasis). Put more succinctly: "The divine image indicates man's relationship and spiritual fellowship with God" (202).

The first man, Adam, is called “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). He was supposed to have a relationship of love and obedience with God, representing him on the Earth. But Adam and Eve, the first woman, disobeyed God. Instead of trusting God’s words, they trusted the words of the serpent, who is later identified as Satan (see Gen. 3:1–6; Rev. 12:9). Because of their sin, Adam and Eve had to leave God’s presence. From that time on, every human being has been born without a proper relationship to God. We are not born as his children.

But God promised Adam and Eve that one of their offspring would defeat Satan (Gen. 3:15). There’s hope for a perfect human being who would represent God on earth the way Adam and Eve failed to do. Throughout the Old Testament, there are a number of potential heroes who seem to be that promised offspring. We encounter people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and others. These men had their strengths and they accomplished great things. But each one of them failed to obey God. Sometimes, they sinned in terrible ways. Would anyone succeed where Adam, Noah, and Israel failed?

Finally, we come to Jesus. When Mary, Jesus’ mother, heard that she would have a son, she was told that her child would be holy and would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Perhaps Jesus would be the one who would never fail the way the rest of us do.

We’re going to look at an account of Jesus being tempted, but before we look at that passage more carefully, we should look at what happens before that. Prior to his temptation, Jesus is baptized. We read this in Matthew 3:13–17:

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”²

John the Baptist was Jesus’ cousin and a prophet. His job was to announce the coming of Jesus, to prepare people for the coming of the kingdom of God. The baptism he offered was a baptism of repentance. Baptism represents a cleansing of sin. The people needed to repent of their sins, or turn away from them and forsake them.

² All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

When Jesus comes to John to be baptized, John is confused. He says, “I need to be baptized by you.” It seems that John doesn’t think Jesus needs to be baptized. John thinks that Jesus should be baptizing him. Why does John react this way? Apparently, John realizes two things: that he is sinful and that Jesus is not. Jesus doesn’t need to repent, but John, like all other people, needs to repent. Still, Jesus insists on getting baptized. Why? “To fulfill all righteousness.” Righteousness is right moral character. Someone who is righteous acts rightly. But it also refers to a right standing with God. Someone who is righteous is “in the right” in God’s eyes. So, what does Jesus mean?

Isaiah 53 is an Old Testament passage that prophesies about a coming “suffering servant” who will die for the sins of his people. Isaiah 53:11 says, “by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” Jesus seems to indicate that he is this servant. He needs to identify with sinful people. He needs to take their place. And that is what Jesus does. He comes to live life as a human being. I talked about that last week. And he is what we are not: righteous. He sets an example for sinful people who will follow him. They need to be baptized.

Since we’re already talking about sin and repentance, I should take a moment to define sin. Sin is described in various ways in the Bible. Sin is described as “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). It is breaking the law of God. This is what some theologians call “actual sin”—it refers to the wrong things we do. But sin is also a power at work within us. If you read Paul’s letters in the New Testament, that becomes clear.³ We have wrong desires and thoughts. These distorted passions just show up within us. Theologians call this “original sin” or “inherited sin.” Augustine, an early Christian pastor and theologian, said that the first man, Adam, “was able not to sin.”⁴ But now, we’re not able not to sin. Our sinful desires inevitably lead to actual sins.

But the key thing about sin is that it breaks our relationship with God. Here is a description of sin given by one of my favorite theologians, Don Carson: “Sin is rebellion against God’s very being, against his explicit word, against his wise and ordered reign.” Sin is not trusting God, not loving him, not obeying him. Carson then tells us the result of sin in the world: “It results in the disorder of the creation and in the spiritual and physical death of God’s image

³ In particular, see Rom. 3:9–20; 7:7–25.

⁴ Augustine of Hippo, “A Treatise on Rebuke and Grace” Chapter 33, in *Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, vol. 5, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 485.

bearers. With perfect justice God could have condemned all sinners, and no one could have justly blamed him.”⁵ God could have wiped out the human race right after the first sin, since God is a perfect judge, and all wrongdoing needs to be punished. But he only gave a partial punishment of sin. Now, there are natural disasters in the world, life is hard, and we experience things like disease, decay, and death. But God is gracious. He didn’t give up on his creation.

Instead of giving up on his fallen creation, God starts a new creation. That’s what Jesus is. He doesn’t have sinful inclinations. He was and is a new type of man.

Notice something important in Matthew 3:16–17. When Jesus comes up out of the water, the “Spirit of God,” the Holy Spirit, comes upon him like a dove. And then we hear the voice of God the Father, who declares that his Son is good. I’ll point out briefly that this is one of many passages that prove the doctrine of the Trinity. God is one being in three Persons. It’s also important to see the Holy Spirit is active in Jesus’ ministry. I’ll talk more about that in a moment. But, first, let me ask you something: does this remind us of anything?

At the beginning of the Bible, at creation, God creates everything out of nothing. He does this through his word: he speaks, and things are created. And we are told, in Genesis 1:2, that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” God, Spirit, Word, and the declaration that the creation is good (Gen. 1:31). Here, we have the Word of God, Jesus (John 1:1), the Spirit, and God the Father, who declares his Son to be good. Matthew is showing us that this is a new creation.⁶ I said the same thing about Jesus’ miraculous conception. This is a new start. This is a new creation. God is doing something radically new.

It’s interesting that in Luke’s Gospel, after Jesus’ baptism, Luke gives us a genealogy that goes in reverse chronological order. It connects Jesus to Adam, who is called “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). And then Luke gives us an account of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Luke wants us to see that Jesus is not only a new creation, but he’s also a new Adam. Jesus is the man that Adam should have been. He is the true Son, the perfect image of God.

⁵ D. A. Carson, “Sin’s Contemporary Significance,” in *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 23.

⁶ Timothy Keller (*King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* [New York: Dutton, 2011], 5), commenting on Mark 1:9–11, arrives at the same conclusion: “There are three parties active in the creation of the world: God, God’s Spirit, and God’s Word, through which he creates. The same three parties are present at Jesus’ baptism: the Father, who is the voice; the Son, who is the Word; and the Spirit fluttering like a dove. Mark is deliberately pointing us back to the creation, to the very beginning of history.” See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 436.

That brings us to the temptation of Jesus, which we find in Matthew 4. Let's read Matthew 4:1–11:

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

“Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,

and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' " ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve.”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Matthew begins by telling us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit. This is important for two reasons: one, Jesus is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Last week I said that Jesus lived his life fundamentally or primarily as a man. He didn't cease being God. He didn't lose any of his divine powers. Jesus is one person who has two natures, a divine one and a human one. He chose willingly to live primarily as a man, to identify with us and to live a righteous life in our place. Much of Jesus' strength in his earthly ministry comes from the work of the Holy Spirit. The second reason this is important is that this is God's will. Jesus must be tempted by the devil, and he must succeed if we are to be saved.

We also see Jesus in the desert, or the wilderness. This should remind us of Israel's wandering in the desert after being rescued out of Egypt by God.⁷ They spent forty years in the wilderness before entering into the Promised Land. (By the way, they did that by crossing through the Jordan River. Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River and then goes into the wilderness.) Jesus, we are told, was fasting in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. (And this reminds us of Noah, who endured forty days and forty nights of rain during the Flood; Gen. 7:4, 12, 17.⁸) This is apparently as long as a human can possibly fast.⁹ And Satan, the devil, the tempter, comes to tempt Jesus.

I could say a lot about Satan, but I don't have the time right now. The Bible tells us that reality is supernatural. There are realities beyond what we can see. There is God, and there is Satan. The two aren't equal powers. God is the Creator and Satan is a created being. But they are opposite. Satan is apparently a fallen, evil angel who does everything he can to disrupt God's plans. Satan knows that Jesus is special, and he tries to stop Jesus' mission. It is no wonder that during Jesus' ministry, there is a heightened presence of demons, Satan's minions.

It's really not surprising once Jesus begins his public ministry, he is met with opposition by Satan. If you're not living publicly as a Christian, Satan might not spend a lot of effort opposing you. But when you are bold as a Christian, Satan will want to stop you. Satan wanted to stop Jesus, so he tries to get him to disobey God the Father. He does this by tempting Jesus.

A quick word about temptation: We are tempted by our evil desires. But God isn't tempted by evil. That's what James 1:13–15 says:

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. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The Bible also states clearly that Jesus is God. He has a divine nature, and when he became man, he added a human nature. Jesus, as the God-man, cannot be tempted by anything evil within him,

⁷ See Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

⁸ This may also remind us of forty-day fasts of Moses (Deut. 9:9) and Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:8), both of which occur at Mount Sinai/Horeb. Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets (two sections of the Hebrew Bible) and they were key prophets who performed "signs and wonders" similar to those that Jesus performed.

⁹ Alan D. Lieberman, "How Long Can a Person Survive without Food?" *Scientific American*, November 8, 2004, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-long-can-a-person-sur/> (accessed January 12, 2015).

or to do something inherently sinful. But Satan tries to tempt him by appealing to his status as the Son of God.

First, Satan says, “*If you are the Son of God . . .*” He plants a seed of doubt in Jesus’ mind. That’s what Satan did when he spoke to Eve. He asked, “Did God really say . . . ?” (Gen. 3:2). Now, Jesus, in his divine nature, is omniscient. He knows everything. But, as strange as it may seem, Jesus in his human nature doesn’t seem to know everything. And since Jesus is living primarily as a human, he seems to set aside his omniscience. That’s why we can read, later in Matthew, that Jesus doesn’t know the time of his return to Earth, to judge everyone who has ever lived (Matt. 24:36). As strange as it seems, in his human nature, it was possible for Jesus to have some doubt about his relationship with the Father.¹⁰

Jesus wasn’t tempted by anything bad within himself. It’s no sin to eat when you’re hungry. But Jesus would have been using his supernatural powers to serve his own will, not the Father’s, and he would have been doubting his Father’s love and provision for him, the way the Israelites doubted God in the wilderness. Jesus said, in John 6:38, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” His mission was to fulfill his Father’s will, not his own. So, he answers Satan with Scripture, quoting a passage from Israel’s wilderness wanderings. He uses Deuteronomy 8:3. He says, “It is written: ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” The Scriptures, God’s Word, were his food. Additionally, in John 4:34, Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

Satan tries to tempt Jesus again with the same phrase: “If you are the Son of God . . .” This time, he wants Jesus to test God the Father by throwing himself off the temple in Jerusalem. The highest point of the temple was 180 feet high.¹¹ Satan even throws in some Scripture himself, quoting Psalm 91:11–12. Satan has better head knowledge about God than we do. According to John Piper, “Indeed the devil thinks more true thoughts about God in one day than a saint does in a lifetime, and God is not honored by it. The problem with the devil is not his

¹⁰ Donald MacCleod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 230: “It does not follow, however, that when Christ was tempted he was always aware, at the human level, that the Tempter could never conquer him. We know that the devil could, on occasion, put a big *if* against his consciousness of sonship (Mt. 4:3). He would have found it equally easy to question his sinlessness. It would certainly be unwise to conclude that at every single point Jesus was in full possession of the whole truth about himself.”

¹¹ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 104.

theology, but his desires.”¹² And false teachers today often use the Bible to support their claims. The problem is they don’t use the Bible in its full context. There’s an old saying: “a text without a context becomes a pretext for a proof-text.”¹³ If you take a verse out of its proper context, you can make it say almost anything you want. That’s why reading all of the Bible is so important.

What Satan seems to be doing is get Jesus to commit a sin of presumption. He’s saying, “If you’re really God’s son, nothing can harm you. Go ahead and see.” Satan may tempt Christians to sin by getting us to think, “Well, I’m a Christian, and nothing can separate me from Christ, then it doesn’t matter if I sin.”

Once again, Jesus uses Scripture to ward off Satan. Again, he quotes from Deuteronomy, this time 6:16. He knows better than to put God to the test.

The final temptation in this passage has Satan showing Jesus all the kingdoms of this world. Perhaps this reminds us of Moses’s view of the Promised Land before he died (Deut. 34:1–4). How Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, we don’t know. But Satan has supernatural powers, and perhaps he showed Jesus an image of the kingdoms of the world. At any rate, Satan is appealing to Jesus’ true status as the King of kings. Satan says that he can give Jesus the world on one condition: that Jesus worship him. Now, I don’t think Satan has the power to offer Jesus the world. I believe he was lying, just as he lied to Eve in the garden of Eden. He is the father of lies, after all (John 8:44).¹⁴ And Satan lies to us, getting us to think that we can have good things apart from God, like fame, fortune, and pleasures.

Regardless, Jesus, as the true Son of God, cannot worship the devil and he knew that being king over all nations, in the way Satan offered, was not his mission. Jesus did not come to be a political ruler. He didn’t come to overthrow the Roman Empire. He didn’t come to establish a political party. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). So, he says, “Be gone, Satan!” And then he quotes Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” With that, Satan flees.

¹² John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 30–31. This reminds me of some lyrics from Tom Waits’s song, “Misery’s the River of the World”: “The devil knows the Bible like the back of his hand.”

¹³ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 115.

¹⁴ Interestingly, Greg Boyd, a pastor and author/theologian, believes that all governments are under Satan’s rule. He writes: “Functionally, Satan is the acting CEO of all earthly governments” (*The Myth of a Christian Nation* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005], 22, quoted in Wayne Grudem, *Politics according to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010], 37. I think Boyd is quite wrong. For a thorough refutation of Boyd, see Grudem, *Politics*, 36–44.

What's interesting is that angels then come to minister to Jesus. Jesus refused to throw himself off the temple so angels would rescue him. But the Father sent angels to take care of Jesus in his weakened state. This shows that Jesus truly is loved by the Father. It also shows that he was operating in his human nature, leaning on God and his angels to sustain him. Jesus, the true Adam, the true Son of God, and even the true Israel, succeeded where they failed. He trusted God. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit. And he used God's Word.

But Satan wasn't done with Jesus. When I read this account of Jesus' temptation, I'm reminded of three other accounts in Matthew's Gospel where Satan seems to try to steer Jesus away from his mission. Right after Peter makes his famous confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), Jesus tells the disciples for the first time that he will die. We read this in Matthew 16:21–23:

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

When Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan!" I believe he means it. Now, Peter isn't actually Satan, and he wasn't possessed by the devil, but his thinking was influenced by Satan. He was believing a lie. He thought that the Messiah couldn't die. He didn't realize the Messiah was also the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He didn't realize that Jesus didn't come in power, but in humility and weakness, to die for our sins. Satan wanted to tempt Jesus with an easy way out. He does that with us, tempting us not to carry our crosses and do what is hard. But Jesus could not be tempted to forgo his mission to die as a ransom.

Last week, I talked about how Jesus was tempted in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–46). I won't repeat all that I said last week, but the temptation again was not due to an evil desire within Jesus. The issue was that Jesus had always had unbroken fellowship with the Father. Now, as the time of the crucifixion came, Jesus knew that that unbroken fellowship would be strained. Jesus would face the wrath of God poured out against sin. So, the temptation was not towards something bad within Jesus, but something good—a desire to feel the Father's love. Yet Jesus obeyed, even under duress. And he got through the temptation by praying.

I'm also reminded by this scene, in Matthew 27:38–40, when Jesus is on the cross:

³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Notice that same phrase we saw earlier: “If you are the Son of God.” Again, the temptation played on Jesus’ status as Son. He might have been tempted to have some assurance that he indeed was the Son. Why should the Son of God die if he never committed a sin? If he was truly the Son, couldn’t he show off his divine power and vindicate himself? Why didn’t the Father send more angels to rescue him?

The reason that Jesus obeyed was because he knew his Father’s will. Of course, the Father’s will is Jesus’ will. Jesus is God, and the three Persons of God—Father, Son, Spirit—have the same will, the same plans, the same desires. But Jesus was tempted as a man, and he had a human will that was tempted. But he never sinned.

We should notice that Jesus did not use his divine powers to fight temptation. He never says, “Hey, I’m God, so I can’t sin.” Perhaps, in his human nature, Jesus didn’t know it wasn’t possible for him to sin. Perhaps he wasn’t sure that his victory over temptation was a sure thing. That’s where the drama of the story is. Jesus couldn’t sin because he’s God. But he didn’t fight sin with his divine nature. He used resources that are available to us: the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and prayer. He fought temptation as a man, and he won, but the victory wasn’t easy.

We don’t have time to go through every passage in the Gospels to show that Jesus never sinned. But in John 8, in the middle of conflict with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Jesus asks, “Which of you convicts me of sin?” (John 8:46). They cannot. Instead, they try to slander him by claiming he wasn’t truly Jewish, or that he was demon possessed (John 8:48). They thought Jesus was lying by laying claim to the title Son of God. They thought he was committing blasphemy. But the New Testament tells us otherwise. Jesus never lied. He never stole. He never lusted. He never coveted. He never committed adultery (physically or spiritually). He wasn’t selfish, lazy, or gluttonous. By any biblical measure, he was without sin.

Many statements in the Bible make that clear (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 John 3:5). Two are worth quoting now. 1 Peter 2:22 says, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.” That’s a quotation from Isaiah 53:9. And 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

That last verse is very important. If Jesus wasn't sinless, we could not be credited with his perfect righteousness. We could not be regarded as sinless in God's eyes. We need Jesus to take our sin on the cross, so it's punished by God. And we need Jesus' righteous standing with God to be credited to us if we are going to enter into a right relationship with God. We are all born outside of a relationship with God. No one starts out a child of God. We are all like Adam after he sinned. We are all born "east of Eden." But we can become children of God if we are united to the true Son of God, the true image of God, the perfectly obedient one.¹⁵

So, how does this affect us? If you are here today and you have put your trust in Jesus, take a moment to thank him for being perfectly obedient. Realize that he did what you couldn't do, and it cost him dearly. This should inspire our worship of Jesus.

If you are a Christian, you should also start to make greater use of the means that Jesus used to fight against sin. Are you relying on the Holy Spirit? Do you ask God for more help from the Spirit? Are you reading God's Word? Jesus said that man lives on "every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Do you know every word of the Bible? Have read through the whole thing? If not, start. If you don't know how to make sense of the Bible, come talk to me and I'll help you. Jesus prayed in order to fight against temptation. Are you praying that God would lead you not into temptation but deliver you from Satan (Matt. 6:13)? If you're not spending much time in prayer, come join us on Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. for our prayer meetings. You can learn more about how to pray and you'll find that praying with others is a good discipline. Jesus was often tempted when he was alone, but he had the strength to resist. When we are tempted, we often need help from brothers and sisters in Christ. When you're weak and tempted, don't go it alone.

We should also remember the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." When you're tempted, ask God for that way of escape, and for endurance.

If you are not truly a Christian, if you've been faking it, if you come to church only because it's a duty, now is the time to put your trust in Jesus. Tell the Father that you realize you

¹⁵ Gerald Bray, *God Is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 578: "What stopped Jesus from sinning was not his divine nature but the relationship with the Father which was his from all eternity. That relationship, far from being beyond our grasp, is what he came to earth to give us, so that we might also become sinless in the sight of God."

have sinned against him, and that you know he would be right to condemn you. Tell him you know your moral failings, you know you don't deserve a relationship with him. But then tell him you believe that he sent his Son to live a righteous life and to die an atoning death on the cross. Pray that the Father would give you the Holy Spirit to make you a new creation. I can hardly improve on the words of Charles Spurgeon: "Go and tell him you are tempted; tempted, perhaps, to despair; tempted to self-destruction; tempted to go back to your old sins; tempted to think that Christ cannot save you. ... Believe that he will, and he will, for you can never believe anything too much of the love and goodness of my Lord. He will be better than your faith to you."¹⁶

¹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "A Tempted Saviour—Our Best Succour," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 9 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1863), 12.