

Text Hebrews 2:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

(Pray)

Main Point

He saves us alongside us

Introduction (300)

Hook

There was a day when kings led their armies in battle. Sometimes even leading the charge on the front line. Dangerous but, their very honour and credibility to lead depended on it.

How strange that would seem for us.

Imagine Christopher Luxon leading the NZ forces in their operations. Or Donald Trump leading the US Marines in undercover operations. That notion is absurd, even comical. These leaders of state would never and could never lead in those ways.

But when we think of our war with sin and death, we must realise that Jesus not only led the charge, he was in the area where the fighting was fiercest. He was in

the forefront of the battle. He was in the bloodiest part of the conflict.

Jesus is not a distant or removed mediator. He is not a leader who sits in his office detached from the conflict the people are facing. He enters the battle himself. He comes alongside his people. He becomes one with his people. He saves us alongside us.

From the 1689

Today we continue in our study of Chapter 8 of the 1689 Confession of faith. And the focus of the study is the humanity of Christ. This comes from paragraph 2 of chapter 8.

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with him who made the world, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made, **did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin;**

Outline

Hebrews 2:17-18 is going to form the outline of our study:

1. Jesus is The Same as Humanity (17a)
2. Jesus is The Same to Propitiate for Humanity (v17b)
3. Jesus faces The Same Temptation as Humanity (v18)

Caution when speaking of Incarnation

Now I just want us to remember our limitations when speaking of the Incarnate Son of God. As Nick reminded us last week human language is limited and the human brain is limited when speaking of the divine

But we do have some helpful theological distinctions and categories to help us know what we can know of the Son of God incarnate.

These are that Jesus has:

One person.

Two natures.

And so we can say things such as:

- Devine Nature cannot suffer. The person of Jesus suffered
- Devine Nature cannot be tempted. The person of Jesus was tempted

We let scripture be the source of our wisdom, not our feeble human reasoning.

Someone once said: *If God were small enough to be fully understood, He wouldn't be big enough to be worshipped.*

And that is very true when we think about the person Jesus Christ. But there is much we can know, and enough for us to know for us to love and worship our Mediator and our God.

Today we will explore some aspects of the Human nature of our Mediator.

Part 1 – The Same as Humanity (v17a)

Exposition

Context

So let us begin with part one of our study, **The Same as Humanity**.

Let us turn our attention to Hebrews 2:17.

Just to help us with where the flow of thought is leading up to this passage, note that Hebrews 2:5-18 continues the argument that the son is superior. He is superior to the prophets and to angels.

And the overarching argument for the superiority of the Son in these verses is that the incarnation, God the Son taking the form of man, is in fact the fulfilment of God's plan of redemption. The fulfilment of God's plan for humanity.

And so Hebrews 2:5-18 is a fascinating discussion on the humanity of Christ and specifically on the **purpose** of the incarnation.

First, In verses 5-9 The author explains that the Son became a man to fulfil God's original intention for humanity. Originally, humans were created to be God's vice regents. That was Adam's role in the Garden, but he failed. God the Son incarnate becomes the first proper vice-regent just as God intended.

Second, in verse 10-13, we see that God the Son became a man to restore others, "many sons" to the original intended position of vice-regent. Jesus is the founder, or leader, or pioneer to what God intended for humanity. As a man, Jesus leads many sons and

daughters to their intended place in the purposes of God.

Then in verse 14 to 16 we see that God the Son became man to destroy the power of Death and the Devil. Since the fall, Death has been the relentless opponent. And Jesus, the promised seed of the woman, defeats that long-lasting enemy.

And then in verses 17 to 18, the verses we are going to dig into, we see that God the Son became man to be a merciful and faithful high priest. This is really the culmination, the climax of the argument.

He became man to save us alongside us.

There was no other way to save us, than for God the Son to become fully, totally and utterly human.

To save us he had to come alongside us.

And that is what verse 17 is getting at

*¹⁷ Therefore he **had to be made** like his brothers in every respect,*

“Therefore”,

Since He was to be the true vice-regent,

since he was to lead the way for others to be vice-regents,

since he was to defeat humans greatest enemy,

since he was to be the high priest,

Since all of these things he had to be made *“like his brothers in every respect”*

Outer man - Generally

And so *in every respect* means, in every respect.

Jesus had an outer man, a physical body, just like you and me.

He had a head, hands, feet. He had blood and bones, just like you and me.

Jesus grew, learned, developed and felt pain just like you and me.

And he felt the sting of death just like you and me will one day face too.

He had a human birth and a human ancestry.

Outer man - Others looking on

The narratives of the Gospel all describe Jesus with a normal human body, but what is also interesting is that those around him, friends and enemies alike, did not see anything special about his physical body:

- It was not glowing,
- He did not have supernatural strength,
- nor did he heal supernaturally.

Even those who knew him for the longest time, those he grew up with and lived with for 30 years, did not see anything special about him.

If Jesus' physical body was any different in any way, it would be the people of his village who would notice. But they are shocked by the claims he makes and even with the miracles still regard him as the "carpenter's son". In fact he is so much just a man to them that they take offence at him.

Notice the obviousness of his humanity that his fellow villagers explicitly assume in Matt 13:55-57

"⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and

*Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? **Where then did this man** get all these things?” ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him.*

Inner Man

Jesus had a normal physical body like you and me. But we know humans are made up of two parts. An outer and an inner man. A physical and a non-physical element. The Bible talks about the inner man using both Spirit or Soul interchangeably.

And so the fact that Jesus was made like us in every way, means that that Jesus too had a human Soul with a human mind, a human will, and human emotions.

He displayed a full range of human emotions: Pity, compassion, affection, distress, anger, joy, annoyance, surprise, disappointment.

Let us turn to the Gospel of Mark together to see a few examples.

Anger and Grief: Mark 3:5

⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Now flick over to Mark 8:12. Annoyance.

¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.”

And then in Mark 8:17, we see Jesus disappointed with his disciples, (once again and not for the last time)

¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not

yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?

Link

These are just a few examples, But you get the point. Jesus had both the physical and non-physical aspects of being a human. He was “*made like his brothers in every respect*”.

And so let us continue with our passage to see a specific reason why God became flesh.

Which brings us to the second part of our study:

Part 2 – The Same to Propitiate for Humanity (v 17b)

Exposition

Verse overview

Look at verse 17 of Hebrews 2 again. Specifically, the second section which says

so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

- Did the second person of the Trinity have to become a man?
- Did he really need to humiliate himself in that way?
- Did he need to become one of us?

In one way, NO, he did not have to. Nothing forced him to become a human.

But the moment the Trinity decided to save mankind, the moment the Triune God chose to redeem mankind, YES it was necessary for the Second person of the Trinity to become a man.

Propitiate

The verse tells us that Jesus became fully human in order to be our high priest, and specifically to propitiate for our sins.

You will remember from our study on the priesthood of Jesus, that a priest represents man to God. A priest brings sacrifices and worship offerings on behalf of the people. He is their representative in that sense.

And the blood sacrifices were a reminder of the sins of the people. A reminder that something was terribly wrong between humanity and God.

Whenever a goat or a bull was offered in sacrifice it was a graphic picture that God is righteous, and that he will not see sin unpunished. It was a graphic picture that sin deserves a punishment. The debt must be paid. And the wages of sin, the debt that sin earned, is death.

Humans have sinned, therefore, humans must pay the debt. Humans committed the crimes against God and so humans must face the consequences of their crimes.

Only a human can pay the debt we owe to God. Only a human can make propitiation for our sins.

Therefore, for Jesus to represent us before God, for Jesus to propitiate for our sins, he had to be made like us in every way.

Representation requires identification

That is what this verse is explaining for us.

Representation requires identification. An angel could not represent mankind. An animal could not represent mankind. A human had to represent mankind.

In the words of the Puritans it has been said “Jesus could not redeem what he did not assume”.

Since Jesus became fully man, He is able to represent and redeem us, he is able to take the function of high priest and represent us before a holy and just God. He is able to pay or propitiate for our sins on our behalf.

Application

Because Jesus was human we have hope of redemption

This verse really presents a stunning reality. If you deny the full humanity of Jesus you deny his redeeming work. But if you affirm him for all that the Bible presents him to be, you can see what a glorious saviour we have.

Since Jesus was fully human we can have full confidence that we have been redeemed. We can know that Jesus rightfully and completely represents us before a holy God. He does not represent angels, or animals, or anything else. He represents those who belong to the human race.

But he represents only those who call upon his name and believe in his work on the cross.

Do you recognise that your sins deserve punishment?
Do you realise that you have no hope to stand before a

holy God if you stand alone? No hope of heaven if you carry the debt yourself?

Jesus offers to pay that debt. To take your punishment on your behalf.

Do you trust that Jesus paid for your sins when he died on that cross? Do you believe that because Jesus is a human he is able to represent you? To stand on your behalf? That he is able to pay for your sins?

Link/Temptation

God the Son became a man in every respect. Outer man. Inner man. And he did that in order to pay the punishment for our sins.

But the purpose of his humanity goes beyond representation and propitiation. Jesus could have appeared as a fully grown man and still fulfilled these glorious works.

But he was born and grew up in this sin cursed world, just like we are. Not only was he made like us in every respect but he also experienced 30 years of human life.

Thirty years of human life is full of many things, but the author wants to focus on one thing in particular.

The author could have highlighted that he experienced joy like us. Or that he experienced satisfaction like us. But the author specifically and intentionally specifies that Jesus was tempted like we are tempted.

Let us take some time to think about what that meant that Jesus was tempted like we are.

Which brings us to the third part of our study:

Part 3 – The Same Temptation as Humanity

Exposition

Verses

Let us turn our attention to verse 18.

¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Now if you flick forward to Heb 4:15, this verse reiterates the same thought

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

These passages make it clear that Jesus was tempted. He experienced the pressures of the world just like we do and he was faced with choices between right and wrong.

Like and unlike us

Now it is important to remember that although he was “*like us in every way*” he was also unlike us in many ways. Specifically that he was without sin. Hebrews 4:15 makes that explicitly clear: “*in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin***”.

A good way to think about this is that Jesus experienced external temptations, but he had no internal temptations.

For example yes Jesus was placed in fearful circumstances. He had a choice to say or to refrain from saying words that would make people angry,

make people hate him and even make people try to kill him. He was in circumstances where the fear of man could have been the motivation for his actions.

But he did not have the internal temptation to promote and protect self at the expense of doing God's purpose. The temptation to fear man was only outward circumstance, not an internal sinful fear like you and I experience.

Also some of his temptations were specific to Jesus as the Second Adam. Specifically his formal temptations in the desert were a mirror to the temptations Adam faced. These temptations are unique to the first and second Adam.

I mean, not many of us have been tempted to turn stones into bread. Or to throw ourselves off a building in the hope of God catching us.

These are significant, but we cannot think that these are the only temptations Jesus faced while on earth especially when the author of Hebrews tells us that He was tempted "*in every respect ...as we are*

In every respect

Just a note about the statement "*in every respect*". This is saying that Jesus was tempted in all areas, not that he was tempted in every specific temptation we are faced with

So we cannot say that Jesus was tempted to eat too much ice cream or to spend hours on social media, but he would have been tempted to indulge and he needed to exercise self-control just like you and me. He needed the holy Spirit to overcome these temptations just like you and me.

Application

Sympathetic in the Little moments

So let us think about some of these Temptations that Jesus would have faced while he lived as a man amongst men. Think of the external pressures he would have faced. The external temptations that would have plagued him, just like they plague us.

For example, Jesus got tired.

How many of us blame our short comings and sinful behaviour on being tired? ***“I know I should not have said that, but I was tired...”*** or ***“I know I responded in a sinful way, but I was tired...”*** As if it was a valid excuse. Jesus too knew what it meant to be tired. Early starts, full days of ministry, late finishes, talking and teaching, confronting and correcting, helping and healing people. He got tired to the point of falling asleep in a boat in the middle of a storm. He knows what it means to be tired, yet was without sin.

Or think of business.

How many of us feel plagued by business? Always something to do, always called upon, never enough time to get things done. Often feeling stretched and having to make a choice between doing what is good and what is better. And all too often blaming business for neglecting our God given responsibilities. Jesus too was busy.

Think of the time when he chose to move on to the next town to continue to preach the gospel instead of staying and healing those who had gathered. He knew what it meant to have limited time. He knew what it meant to disappoint people when wrong expectations

were placed on him. He knew what it meant to be busy, yet he was without sin.

Or think of making tough decisions. We all struggle in some way as we face decisions, and follow human reasoning. Think of Jesus who spends all night praying before deciding who would be the 12 apostles. He knew what it meant to make tough decisions and to rely on the father in prayer.

And the list could go on.

- He knew what it meant to juggle priorities,
- to have no home,
- to have no financial security,
- to be slandered,
- to be falsely accursed,
- to be rejected by his siblings,
- to lose his father at a young age,
- and to be abandoned by his friends.

He knew what it meant to face the struggles and the trials we face, yet he was without sin.

In all of these things there is temptation to respond in an ungodly way. To respond in a selfish way instead of a God honouring way.

But we know that Jesus always responded in a God-honouring way. Always thought, spoke and acted in a sinless way.

We know Jesus responded in a God-honouring way.

Let me read Phil 4:4-7. And as we read this, think of the struggles and trials Jesus went through. Think of the similar struggles you go through. And make note of the godly response we know Jesus would have shown.

The godly response we seek, but so often struggle to demonstrate.

In the face of the struggles and trials of life here is the Godly response:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness^[d] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Even in the face of fatigue, business, slander, loss and abandonment Jesus was able to rejoice in the Lord.

Even in the face of financial insecurity, home instability and life-changing decisions, he was never anxious and brought everything to God in prayer.

He knows the pressures of life. The same pressures of life we face. He understands what we face. He faced them too and as a human he responded in a God honouring, God exalting, God glorifying way.

We are never tempted beyond our ability

He knows what it is like. He knows us. And he promises that he will not tempt us beyond what we can bear.

Let me read 1 Cor 10:13, and think of the significance of the phrase “*common to man*” in regards to the humanity of Jesus.

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.

Jesus knows what we endured and so can we because there is always a way of escape.

Conclusion

As we bring the study to a close, let me just stress the magnitude that Jesus saves us alongside us. He is like the kings of old, leading the battle charge against sin and death amongst his people

He was made like us in every way. He had a physical body which grew and developed, and he had soul which learned and displayed emotions.

He became one of us to represent us before God. Only a human could represent humanity, and only a human could be a substitute for the lives of other humans. Jesus took on humanity to be both the one offering the sacrifice and being himself the sacrifice. In his humanity he was both the offeror and the offering.

And as if that was not enough, he experienced 30 years in this sin cursed world in order to sympathize with us. In order to understand by experience, what it means to go through the trails and struggles we face. He faced these without sinning once. He faced them in his humanity, relying on the holy spirit and praying to the father.

He endured to the end for us to be saved. We endeavour to endure to the end because we are saved.

Let us pray