

Main Idea: According to Hebrews 2:14-18, because God the Son became a man, we experience three life-changing benefits.

- I. We have a deliverer (14-15).
  - A. Christ provides freedom from the devil (14).
    - 1. He did it by coming to enemy turf.
    - 2. He did it by becoming what we are.
    - 3. He did it by means of His death.
  - B. Christ provides freedom from death (15).
    - 1. Fear enslaves.
    - 2. Christ takes the fear out of death.
- II. We have a high priest (16-17).
  - A. Christ did not come to help angels (16).
  - B. Christ came to help human beings (17).
    - 1. He is merciful.
    - 2. He is faithful.
    - 3. He brings people to God.
    - 4. He took away the barriers that separate people from God.
      - a. He took our sin.
      - b. He took God's wrath.
- III. We have a helper (18).
  - A. Christ was tempted.
  - B. Christ can help us when we are tempted.
    - 1. He gives us an example.
    - 2. He understands what we feel.
    - 3. He enables us to say no to sin.
    - 4. He gives us grace.
    - 5. He intercedes for us.

Make It Personal: Because God became a man...

- 1. We can experience hope today.
- 2. We should glorify Him always.

*Scripture Memory Song ("Redeemed people sing the Word"):* Micah 7:7

I invite you to join us this evening for *Worship the King: A Special Christmas Communion Service*. A word about what we'll be doing. This evening, we are going to worship the King (that's who Jesus is) by pondering four phases in the rule of our King. We're going to worship the Preincarnate King, then worship the Newborn King, then worship the Crucified King, then worship the Coming King. We will worship our King in a variety of ways. Through the reading of His Word, through the singing of songs that reflect on His distinct character and work, through listening to the ministry of music. And then when we come to the portion in our service in which we *worship the crucified King*, we will look back to the cross and observe communion together. It will be a special time. So come one and all to worship the King in a special communion service.

And now it's our privilege to worship Him through hearing His preached Word. Let's open our Bibles to Hebrews 2 for a message entitled, "*Because God Became a Man*." Before we read, we need to prepare ourselves. The statement should shock us, but doesn't. *God became a man*. We hear those words and think, "Oh yea, that's Christmas." And then we think of a baby in a manger, and quaint shepherds, and then gifts under a tree and turkey dinners and watching football games on the couch.

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\*\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Hebrews series preached at WBC in 2007.

We're not feeling the effect those words ought to produce. Let me show you what I mean. I'm going to read three press releases that use the same verb *became* in them, and you tell me the effect they produce.

"Coach Ryan Day left Ohio State this week and *became* the head football coach of the Michigan Wolverines."

"Elon Musk submitted his resignation as CEO of Tesla, SpaceX, and xAI to the respective boards of these companies and *became* a janitor working the night shift at Walmart in New Boston, Ohio."

"Former U.S. President George W. Bush sold his home in Preston Hollow, Texas and moved to the middle east this week and *became* a citizen of Iraq."

What effect did these news releases produce on you? Surely, you must have said to yourself, "No way! That is definitely fake news!" And if I insisted that they were indeed true statements, you would then gasp and respond with a loud question, the same question that *God became a man* should produce.

Why?!! Why in the world would Coach Day do that? Or Elon Musk? Or President Bush? Or God? You can't hear what seems like an unbelievable statement like these and let it slide. *Why* would God become a man?!

If we're not feeling the weight of that question, we will not appreciate the staggering answer God Himself gives us in today's text. Indeed, God wants us to know why He did what He did. So I'm going to do two things. First, I'm going to read His answer and then secondly, I'm going to pray and ask for His gracious help so that we see and experience the life-changing significance of why He says He became a man.

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 2:14-17*

There is God's answer to the why question. According to Hebrews 2:14-18, God became a man so that undeserving sinners like us can experience three astounding, hope-giving, life-transforming benefits. I'm not using hyperbole. Three *astounding* benefits. To help us feel the effect these verses should produce in our, consider another illustration.

Suppose you received the following phone call on January 1. You hear a voice on the other end saying, "This is the Internal Revenue Service." And your heart skips a beat. Then the person says, "We've been reviewing your tax records for the past ten years and discovered something quite significant." Uh oh. Then he says, "You've been a model citizen. No late payments. No indication of fraudulent reporting on your tax returns. Consequently, you have been selected as citizen of the year. Your reward? You will not be charged any taxes this year. None. No federal tax. No state tax. No local taxes. It's all yours to keep."

Would that news affect the way you would approach 2026? Probably so. While I don't have the authority to promise you no taxes in 2026, I do have the authority to give you news of much greater significance. My authority is the Word of God, and the even greater news is what God is saying to us in today's text. My friend, if Christ is your Savior, you are entitled to three benefits that are indeed *out of this world!*

Let's be honest. Many in the Tri-State region know the facts about Christmas, fewer still know the significance of those facts, and even fewer still know the real implications of Christmas, specifically, the amazing benefits that are available to them because of the incarnation of God's Son. This is the gold that we're going to mine in this message. According to Hebrews 2:14-18, God wants us to know that because His Son became a man, we now have access to three life-changing benefits.

I. We have a deliverer (14-15).

II. We have a high priest (16-17).

III. We have a helper (18).

### I. We have a deliverer (14-15).

Notice that verse 14 begins with a connective word, “Since.” The book of Hebrews is full of transition words: *therefore* (verse 1)...*for* (verse 2)...*for* (verse 11)...and *since* (in verse 14). That’s because the book of Hebrews was written to persuade people. People then. People now. The author (who is anonymous to us) wrote this epistle to convince people, predominantly Jewish by nationality, to follow Jesus to the end. And the reason he offered this exhortation is because those reading this letter were experiencing intense persecution which they could escape if only they would go back to their old beliefs and practices.

The writer of Hebrews writes like a persuasive attorney. To convince his readers, he uses an authority he knows they will respect. He cites the Old Testament Scriptures to show the supreme value of Jesus Christ. And so, he puts quote after quote from the Hebrew Scriptures to make it clear that all of the Old Testament points to Jesus. The ceremonies, the covenants, the laws, it all points to Him, like a shadow points to the person who made the shadow. His point, of course, is that if you have the person, why would you settle for the shadow?

Verse 14 continues, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood.” This raises the question, “What children is he talking about?” He’s talking about the children he just mentioned in the previous verse, “Here am I, and the *children* God has given me (13 NIV),” a quotation of Isaiah 8:18. In Isaiah 8, the “I” referred to Isaiah, and “the children” referred to the children God gave Isaiah which served as “signs” in his ministry. In Hebrews 2, however, the writer indicates that the “I” ultimately refers to Jesus, God’s Son who entered the world (see verse 9). And the “children,” verse 13 indicates, are individuals that God has given to His Son, individuals that Jesus calls “brothers” according to verse 11.

We unpacked all of this in our last message. In verses 10-13 we learned that through the person of Jesus, sons of Adam can become sons of God. Because God’s Son became a man, we who were once cut off from God can now belong to God’s family. How does this happen? According to verse 10, the Son brings God’s sons to glory.

How does He do that? Verse 10 says He did it *through suffering*. Verse 11 indicates that the Son is the one who “sanctifies” [NIV “the one who makes men holy”]. And those He has made holy He calls His brothers.

But how can that be? How can people who once were *not holy* become holy, and how can those who were once alienated from God be reconciled to God to the point that God calls them His “children” and His Son calls them His “brothers”? The answer is because the One who came to earth is *a deliverer*, a liberator.

To liberate is, by definition, “to set free what was in bondage.” That’s what God’s Son did. He liberated Adam’s helpless children. And what precisely did the Son do to liberate Adam’s helpless children?

Verses 14-15 tell us, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things [NIV 1984 ‘he too shared in their humanity’], that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,<sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

When Christ came to earth, He came to secure freedom, namely to liberate us from two cruel oppressors, the first mentioned in verse 14 and the other in verse 15.

**A. Christ provides freedom from the devil.** Who is the devil? Verse 14 identifies him as “the one who has the power of death.” The devil is a killer. That’s what Jesus called him in John 8:44, saying, “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to

the truth, for there is no truth in him.” The devil, or “Satan” as he is also identified (Matt. 4:10), is a lying killer. He made a promise to Eve in the garden, but he can’t be trusted. His promise (“Eat and you will be like God”) and Adam and Eve’s sinful choice to act on that promise brought bondage and death to the world.

The apostle John made the same point in 1 John 3:8, “He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”

John says that the Son appeared to destroy the devil’s work. The question is, *how*? How did the Son defeat the evil one and provide freedom for all who would believe in Him? Hebrews 2:14 tells us. Let’s take a closer look at verse 14 and notice three aspects of Christ’s work to free us from the devil.

1. *He did it by coming to enemy turf.* To earth, that is. He came to the realm under the dominion of “the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:22 KJV).” The Son of God invaded enemy territory.

What war tactic did the Son utilize in this invasion? Did He mobilize all the forces of heaven in His counter-attack? No. Did He enter the world with His sword swinging? No. To the contrary, He went undercover on this rescue mission.

2. *He did it by becoming what we are.* Verse 14 states that He literally became “blood and flesh.” Why would He do that? Because blood and flesh is what those who needed to be delivered are. The Son’s tactic to rescue humans necessitated that He Himself become a human and “share in” (Greek *meteschen* ‘to partake of’) our “humanity” (that’s the term the NIV uses). The Greek text simply says “He did take part of the same.”

That was unthinkable to Roman ears in the first century. To a Greek-thinking, polytheistic Roman world, the flesh was bad and only the spirit was good. But God’s Son took on human flesh and became what we are, and did so to secure freedom from the devil. But there’s something even more shocking, says the writer of Hebrews.

3. *He did it by means of His death.* Listen to the NIV, “He shared in their humanity *so that* [note the purpose clause] by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.” Ponder that carefully. The Son came to die *as* a man *for* man. And by His death He destroyed the devil.<sup>2</sup>

A skeptic might say, “It sure doesn’t look like He did a very good job. Have you checked the news recently? The devil doesn’t look destroyed to me.” But wait. The verb “destroy” in verse 14 doesn’t mean to annihilate. In fact, 1 Peter 5:8 actually states that the devil is like a roaring lion who is seeking to devour God’s people. The word “destroy” means “render inoperative, make of none effect.” As Wiersbe puts it, “Satan is not destroyed, but he is disarmed.”<sup>3</sup>

And his fate is sealed and settled. In Revelation 20:10 the Lord has already revealed what will happen to this killer. “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (NIV).”

But there’s another foe that the Deliverer came to earth to defeat. First, the devil.

**B. Christ provides freedom from death.** Verse 15 begins with the word “and” which indicates there’s another reason why the Son shared our humanity and died.

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<sup>2</sup> P. Hughes, p. 112. Hughes reminds us, “The power of death is held by the devil only in a secondary and not in an ultimate sense. Death is indeed the dark reality of his tyranny. But God is still supreme in his sovereignty.”

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, p. 284.

Notice what it is, "...and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Notice the contrast between fear and Christ.

1. *Fear enslaves.* Specifically, the fear of death is what enslaved humanity. "Eat and you'll be like God," said Satan. But he was lying. "Eat and you will surely die," said God. And He meant it.

From the moment we're born, we're heading down a winding path that always leads to the same destination. It matters not if we are born in a palace or a shack. It matters not if our path starts in Boston or Beijing. The path ends at the same place. To borrow from a phrase we'll see later in Hebrews (9:27), "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (KJV)."

That's why there is fear in death. The judgment is coming. This is not simply a fear of the unknown, that we've never seen what's beyond the grave. It's what we do know that evokes the greatest fear, for we do know what's coming beyond the grave. Because God told us. We have an appointment, He says. We will die, all of us. And then we will face the judgment, His judgment.

"I'm not afraid," you say. "I've lived a pretty good life. I think I'll fare alright at the judgment." You might be interested in knowing that God doesn't grade on a curve, that His standard is perfection (Matt. 5:48). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23). So if you're perfect, if you've never transgressed God's law, then you have nothing to fear, for God is just. But... If you have sinned, then it matters not how many good deeds you have done, for your sin must be punished, for God is just.

It's only when we feel the weight of this reality that the good news becomes good news. Indeed, my friend, this is the greatest news a sinner could ever hear. He came to earth, says the writer of Hebrews, in order to "deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."

2. *Christ takes the fear out of death.* And how did He do it? The Son, says Hebrews 2, defeated death by dying. In the words of the poet, S. W. Gandy:

*He hell in hell laid low,  
Made sin, He sin 'o'erthrew,  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death, by dying, slew.<sup>4</sup>*

Yes, by means of His perfect life, His substitutionary death, and His triumphant defeat of death three days later, Christ took the fear out of death. For everyone? No. He took the fear out of death for those who know see Him, who believe in Him, who behold Him the way a drowning man beholds a life-preserver bobbing in the water.

Meditate on this statement, *Christ takes the fear out of death.* Are you experiencing this reality personally? Are you a fearful person? Brothers and sisters, we who know Christ know that death is not the end, that beyond the grave is life more amazing than anything we've ever tasted. Sadly, some who profess Christ still live in fear of this enemy that Christ has conquered. What should be said to such folks?

Here's what *Martin Luther* had to say. "He who fears death or is not willing to die is not sufficiently Christian. As yet such people lack faith in the resurrection, and love this life more than the life to come."<sup>5</sup>

*John Calvin* echoed a similar thought. "Although we must still meet death, let us nonetheless be calm and serene in living and dying, when we have Christ going before

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<sup>4</sup> S. W. Gandy, in F. F. Bruce, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Quote taken from Hughes, p. 114.

us. If anyone cannot set his mind at rest by disregarding death, that man should know that he has not yet gone far enough in the faith of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

*John Chrysostom*, a pastor in the fourth century, noticed that in his day some who professed to believe in Christ and His resurrection were contradicting that belief by the way they behaved at funerals. He said, “When I behold the wailings in public places, the groanings over those who have departed this life, the howlings and all the other unseemly behaviour, I am ashamed before the heathen and Jews and heretics who see it, and indeed before all who for this reason laugh us to scorn.”

In other words, if we really believe that death isn’t the end it should affect the way we grieve. Chrysostom added, “Those who are really worthy of being lamented are the ones who are still in fear and trembling at the prospect of death and have no faith at all in the resurrection.” To put it in the modern vernacular, if you *don’t* believe in Christ and in the resurrection to come, then you ought *not* go back to the church after the funeral and eat potato salad, but indeed you *ought* to mourn. Those without Christ are the ones who ought to go to pieces in the face of death, yet for those in Christ death becomes an occasion to exhibit peace, His peace.

With that in mind Chrysostom concludes, “May God grant that you all depart this life unwailed!”<sup>7</sup>

Because God became a man, we have a deliverer. Behold Him today! Christ has secured freedom over the devil and death itself. Yet there’s more, a second benefit.

## II. We have a high priest (16-17).

The good news continues in verse 16, “For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham [NIV ‘Abraham’s descendants’].” The writer has been talking a lot about angels in chapters one and two. Apparently, his readers were clinging to distorted, inflated notions about angels, as many are doing today. In 1:14 he reminded them that angels are servants, “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” Now he takes it a step further.

**A. Christ did not come to help angels (16).** Verse 16 again, “For surely it is not angels that he helps.” He doesn’t help angels? What does that mean? The verb (*epilambano*) can be taken in different ways depending on the context. The ESV and NIV translate it “help.” The KJV renders it “took” as in, “He *took* not on him the nature of angels, but he *took* on him the seed of Abraham.” In either case, the ultimate sense is the same, as follows.<sup>8</sup>

The Son of God didn’t *take* upon Himself the nature of an angel, but stooped lower and became a man. And why? Because God didn’t purpose to *help* fallen angels.

Who then did He purpose to help? The writer says, “He helps the offspring of Abraham.” Warren Wiersbe reminds us, “He became a Jew, a part of the ‘seed of Abraham’. The Jews were a despised and hated race, and yet our Lord became a Jew.”<sup>9</sup>

But wait. The offspring of Abraham? That’s who He helps? We might expect the writer to say “the offspring of Adam,” the father of all. But no, he says that Christ helps “the offspring of *Abraham*”.

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<sup>6</sup> Quote taken from Hughes, p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> Quotes taken from Hughes, pp. 114-5.

<sup>8</sup> This is why God became a man. But not just any ‘man’ in general, for verse 16 states He *took upon* Himself the nature of Abraham’s seed (as the KJV puts it), in order to *help* Abraham’s descendants (as the NIV renders it).

<sup>9</sup> Wiersbe, p. 284.

Why Abraham? We might say it's because the readers were Jewish and therefore Abraham's descendants. But belonging to Abraham's line isn't a qualification for the help of the Messiah. Frankly, it can be a detriment.

Remember what the Jews said to Jesus in John 8:33? "They answered him, 'We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.'" And Jesus' response? He said in John 8:37, "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you."

Having Jewish blood can hinder a person from coming to Christ, just like having church membership does for others, or a baptismal certificate, or a confirmation card. "Look what I have and what I have done! Surely God helps me!"

No. It's not people who share Abraham's *blood* that Christ helps. It's people who share Abraham's *faith*. These are the true offspring of Abraham. As Paul explains in Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

No, it's not angels that Christ came to help. It's us, friends. How? By becoming a high priest for us. "Do I need a high priest?" you ask. Yes, you do, and so do I. Sinners need a priest, a go-between, someone who can fix their sin problem so they can be right with God. This is what priests did in the Old Testament. And this is what's amazing. This is what Christ does, not for angels, but for us.

**B. Christ came to help human beings (17).** Notice verse 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 [NIV 'atonement'] for the sins of the people."

This is the first mention of Christ's high priesthood in the book of Hebrews, and it won't be the last. If you are a good person, this won't matter much to you. But if you're a sinner (like I am), this is exactly what you need every time you say an unkind word, think an unholy thought, or violate God's law in any other way. In the person of Jesus Christ, we have a high priest! Here we gain four insights concerning our high priest.

1. *He is merciful.* We are all too familiar with the sex scandals involving priests in the Roman Catholic church, and the moral failure of respected evangelical pastors too. If this reveals anything, it's that human priests can be selfish, and it's certainly not restricted to the Catholic faith. Men of the cloth can abuse their positions of spiritual authority to gratify the wicked cravings of their depraved hearts. Remember Annas and Caiaphas, those wicked high priests of Israel? They condemned Jesus in order to maintain their powerful positions.

Human priests can let you down, and perhaps have. But not Christ! He is a *merciful* high priest who always does what is good for those under His care. Related to that is a second insight.

2. *He is faithful.* You can depend on Christ. He's reliable. He's never out to lunch. He keeps His promises. He's true to His Word. He's true to His people and holds them in His hands (John 10:28-29). He's available when you need Him.

And let me tell you. As sinners, we need Him a lot. Annie Hawks penned these words in 1872 and they're just as true now as they were then.

*I need Thee ev'ry hour, most gracious Lord;  
no tender voice like Thine can peace afford.  
I need Thee, O I need Thee; ev'ry hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee.*

3. *He brings people to God.* Verse 17 begins, "For this reason he *had to be* made like his brothers in every way." "It *behooved* him to be made like his brethren (AV)."

Throughout history some have said that God really didn't become a man. He just *looked* like He was a man. That's what *docetism* taught, for instance, towards the end of the first century. The docetics said that if Christ suffered he was not divine, and if He was God he could not suffer.<sup>10</sup> In the second century, a group known as the Gnostics took this thinking a step further. The Gnostics viewed Jesus as "an alien messenger from outside the present evil world" and said that "this alien Jesus came to awaken Gnostics to their destiny outside the realm of creation."<sup>11</sup>

Even in our day there are all kinds of false notions about the person of Christ. Ask a Mormon if he believes in Jesus Christ and he'll affirm he does, but according to Mormon beliefs Jesus is the brother of Lucifer and is simply one god in a pantheon of gods. Islam teaches that Jesus was a messenger of God, not the Son of God. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was merely a created being, that He was not resurrected bodily but only as a spirit being, and that in 1914 He returned invisibly to earth.<sup>12</sup>

You say, "I don't understand why all this matters. As long as a person believes in Jesus, that's all that matters, isn't it?"

My friend, in order to accomplish what Jesus Christ accomplished He had to be the person the Bible says He was and is. Hebrews 2:17 says He *had to be made like his brothers in every way*, which makes it clear that Christ was fully man. And as we saw previously in Hebrews 1:3, *the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*, making it clear that Christ was fully God. He is fully man and fully God. And here's why it matters.

Verse 17 says He had to be made like his brothers...*so that* [here comes the reason why the identity of Christ is so critical] "he might become a merciful and faithful high priest *in service to God*." There's the reason. The Son became a man so that as a man He might take the mantle of a high priest and perform a service to God.

Again, that's what priests do. A priest is a go-between. A priest brings people to God. A priest does a work as prescribed by God for the benefit of human beings. And that's what Christ did.

And what specific work did He accomplish as a high priest? The end of verse 17 tells us, "To make propitiation for the sins of the people." Simply put...

4. *He took away the barriers that separate people from God.* The Greek word is *hilaskomai*. The NIV translates it as "make atonement for the sins," with an alternate reading in the footnote, "and that he might turn aside God's wrath, taking away" the sins of the people. The word actually contains two thoughts, and Christ accomplished both.

**a. He took our sin.** All of it. Every sin we have ever committed or will commit. Every violation of God's law. He took it. But there's more.

**b. He took God's wrath.** On the cross the God-man took upon Himself the sins you and I have committed and the sins committed by a sea of humanity, and having taken those sins upon Himself He then took the wrath of God which must be demonstrated as a result of those sins.

The NKJV says, as does the ESV, that He made "propitiation for the sins of the people." That's a good word. The term "propitiation" is related to the place in the Jewish temple called "the mercy seat" (see 9:5). On the Day of Atonement once a year the high priest would enter the Holy Place and sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal

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<sup>10</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 326.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See Ron Carlson & Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings*, p. 122.



upon the mercy seat which sat on the ark of the covenant. On the basis of that sacrifice God would withhold His wrath and extend mercy to His people, pardoning their sin.

That's what God's Son accomplished. His cross became the final *mercy seat*. He had to become a man so that as the final priest, as our High Priest, He might offer the final sacrifice for sin. He would not offer a lamb (for previous priests had offered thousands of lambs). No, He would offer Himself, His perfect life, to God on the altar of His cross, and in so doing, while bearing the sins of His people He would take the wrath of God in their place.

Do you know what's tragic? What's tragic is that there are millions, even billions of people in the world who don't even know there is a high priest. They've never heard of Him. But an even greater tragedy perhaps is that there are millions who have heard of Him, yet are ignoring this great high priest. Some are trying to reach God through other priests. Others, deceived by their own sense of goodness, convince themselves they don't need this great high priest.

Oh my friend, may this not be said of you! Because God became a man, we now have a high priest, and we all need Him. I invite you, I urge you, to believe in Him today. Come to Him. Bring your sin to Him. Affirm that the sacrifice He offered on the cross is sufficient to remove your sin and bring you into the family of God!

Yet there's more! Because God became a man, we have a deliverer and a high priest.

### III. We have a helper (18).

A specific kind of helper, a present tense helper. Let's be honest. Most of us in this room know that Christ has removed the penalty of sin for us. He's our deliverer and our high priest, and we praise Him! Yet we still struggle. Sin remains a foe to us, a powerful foe. We're tempted every day. We fight. We battle. We resist. We fall at times.

Years ago I was on my knees next to a godly man I highly respected and heard him pray something like this, "Lord, it's like we're walking through a minefield. Help us!"

If you can relate, I have good news. Because God became a man, we have helper, as verse 18 explains, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." We learn two comforting realities about our Helper here.

**A. Christ was tempted.** The writer specifically says that He *suffered* when He was tempted. We might think that temptation was no big deal for Jesus. "After all, He's God!" But His temptation was real, so much so that He *suffered* as He faced it. Why would the pure, innocent, holy Son of God willing choose to experience the anguish of intense temptation? The answer is staggering, a second comforting reality.

**B. Christ can help us when we are tempted.** The verb "help" is the Greek term *boethesthai*, a compound word comprised of the words "cry" (*boe*) and "run" (*theo*). Gromacki explains, "The descriptive analogy, thus, is to run to the assistance of a person who is crying out for help. Christ did just that."<sup>13</sup>

How does He help us? Consider five ways that Christ helps us when we're tempted.

1. *He gives us an example.* When we read the gospels, we see Jesus showing us how to respond to temptation. Remember when He was into the desert? Matthew 4:1 says the Spirit led Him there "to be tempted by the devil." How did Jesus respond to temptation? He quoted Scripture (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He resisted the evil one. He denied Himself with an absolute resolve to please His Heavenly Father, and He worshipped His Father. In so doing, He helped us by giving us an example.

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<sup>13</sup> Gromacki, p. 52.

2. *He understands what we feel.* Verse 17 makes it clear that as the God-man, Jesus Christ was “made like his brothers in every way (NIV).” Now verse 18 shows the significance of verse 17. Because He did, we have a Savior who understands. To borrow the modern vernacular, He’s been there, done that.

Friends, our Savior knows what it’s like to be a helpless infant, a toddler who scrapes his knees, a forgotten child, even a maturing adolescent. And as an adult He experienced the frustrating realities of prejudice, of being hated because He was different, of being misunderstood, misrepresented, of being abused, rejected and ultimately killed.

Our Helper knows from experience what it’s like to be hungry, thirsty, and weary. He’s felt the challenge of trying to pray when the body is tired, of wanting some privacy but not getting it because of people in need, of being forsaken in a crowd. Yes, He’s truly *been there, done that*.

And when it comes to physical suffering, He’s felt that too. For us, it might be migraines, joint pain, and bodily breakdown in all sorts of other ways. But for Him, it was a beard pulled out from its roots, a back torn to shreds, wrists nailed to a cross, blood loss, suffocation. And of course, He felt what we will *never* feel, the fury of divine wrath being poured out on Him as a consequence of divine lawbreaking, not His, but ours.

We might think, “But since Jesus never sinned, He doesn’t understand how bad temptation can become.” Yet that’s not true. It’s the other way around. We are the ones who don’t know how bad temptation can become because we give in before it reaches its greatest intensity. He didn’t. He felt temptations power to its fullest, and never sinned.

Think of two men trying to lift a heavy object. Who better understands how heavy the object is, the man who tries to lift but can’t budge the object, or the man who heaves it over his head, holds it there for the count, and then returns it to the ground?

Westcott explains, “Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of his sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain.”<sup>14</sup>

My friend, are you hurting today? Look to the Helper. He understands.

For the sake of time, I’ll just mention some other ways He helps us.

3. *He enables us to say no to sin.* This is good to know as we begin our week. And how does He enable us not to sin? As we’ll see in chapter four...

4. *He gives us grace.* How do we tap into this grace? By going to the throne of grace and asking for it.

5. *He intercedes for us.* Listen to Hebrews 4:14-16, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

You say, “Wait a minute, pastor. I hear what you’re saying, that He is the helper. But I’m not feeling it. I feel alone in my struggle. What do I need to do?”

You’ve just taken the first important step. You’ve admitted you need help. Now take the second step. There’s a conversation that needs to happen right now and frankly needs to be repeated most days. This might sound strange, but it’s a conversation that needs to happen between you and *you*, between you and *your own soul*.

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<sup>14</sup> Westcott, taken from P. Hughes, p. 124.

I'm indebted to Charles Wesley who models this soul talk well for us. Have this conversation with your soul.

*Arise, my soul, arise!*

*Shake off thy guilty fears;*

*The bleeding Sacrifice*

*In my behalf appears.*

*Before the throne my Surety stands, Before the throne my Surety stands;*

*My name is written on His hands.*

*He ever lives above*

*For me to intercede,*

*His all-redeeming love,*

*His precious blood to plead.*

*His blood atoned for all our race, His blood atoned for all our race,*

*And sprinkles now the throne of grace.*

*Five bleeding wounds He bears,*

*Received on Calvary;*

*They pour effectual prayers;*

*They strongly speak for me.*

*Forgive him, O forgive, they cry, Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,*

*Nor let that ransomed sinner die!*

I can't tell you that you don't need to pay your taxes this year. But I can give you infinitely better news that can radically affect the way we live from this day forward. We have a *Deliverer*. We have a *High Priest*. And we have a *Helper*.

Make It Personal: Because God became a man...

1. *We can experience hope today.* Real hope, eternal hope.

2. *We should glorify Him always.* He is worthy.

**Closing Song:** #89 "Our Great Savior" (all five verses)

**This evening:** "Worship the King: A Special Christmas Communion Service"