

• *The explanation of Jesus' sufferings*

Now Hebrews 2:14–18 comes to the heart of the explanation of Jesus' sufferings. ¹⁴*Since the children have flesh and blood, he himself also in the same way took flesh and blood. He did this so that through death he might devastate the one who had the power of death, that is the devil,* ¹⁵*and that he might set free people who in fear of death were all their lives in bondage.* Let us consider this in stages.

1. The children of God have 'flesh and blood'

1. **The children of God have 'flesh and blood'**. The writer now switches from speaking of the total human race to speaking about the children of God. God's salvation is on offer to the human race. Jesus died for the sins of the human race. Yet not everyone becomes a child of God because not everyone actually receives God's offer. Only those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ actually become part of God's new humanity, who will be assisted in their travelling to glory. 'Flesh and blood' speaks of the weakness of human nature.

2. Repeated failure leads to fear of death

2. **Because of repeated failures men and women have a fear of death.** Death is the salary that sin pays us. Because of our justifiable guilt-feelings we have a fear of death and this leads us into many other kinds of fear. We would not fear death if we did not feel guilty.

3. Fear of death leads to bondage

3. **Satan exploits the fear of death to bring men and women into bondage.** Every kind of bondage is really bondage to fear of death. It is possible for a Christian to be fearful and yet there really is no need for it. Fear itself is a bondage, a slavery. The way out of this kind of captivity is to see and believe that Jesus has dealt with sin and therefore has dealt with death which is the punishment of sin.

4. Jesus comes into our position

4. **Jesus comes into our position.** He takes upon himself human nature with all of its weaknesses. Jesus was not a super-man! In his human nature he was an ordinary man. He did what he did by prayer and by faith. He was not sinful but he was vulnerable to temptation. The Father's plan was for him to die the death that we should have died, so that we might have no fear of death. None of this was for angels. ¹⁶*For surely he does not take hold of angels but he takes hold of the seed of Abraham* [believers in Jesus].

5. Jesus' genuine human nature enables him to be a sympathetic high priest

5. **Jesus' genuine human nature enables him to be a sympathetic high priest.** ¹⁷*Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in serving God, and so that he might make propitiation for the sins of the people*¹. This is the first time in our letter that Jesus is called a 'high priest' (although we had a hint of it in 1:3). The high priest of the Mosaic covenant had to help sinners to relate to God. Jesus was not a Levite but he does have the same function of helping sinners and weak Christians (like us!) to relate to God. His human nature enables him to be utterly sympathetic towards fallen human beings.

6. Jesus wanted to be our Saviour

6. **Jesus wanted to be our Saviour.** We might ask: what made Jesus go to the cross for us? One answer is: he went to the cross because he sympathized with us so much that he **wanted** to go to the cross to save

us. He was 'made like his brothers and sisters...so that he might make propitiation for the sins of the people' ¹. The thought is: Jesus' fellow-feeling for us made him want to be the sacrifice for our sins. He wants to see us with our sins forgiven. He wants to bring us to glory as God's obedient servants.

• *Because Jesus was tempted and tested*

• *He is able to help those who are tempted and tested*

• *Jesus was always under pressure to sin*

• *Therefore He is the most qualified to help us when tempted*

Verse 18 brings the paragraph to a summary and a close. *For because he himself has suffered – for he was tempted and tested – he is able to help those who are being tempted and tested.* In English tempting and testing are expressed by two different words. Hellenistic Greek, however, had one word which covered both ideas. *Peirazo* sometimes means 'test', sometimes means 'tempt', but often includes both ideas such that it needs to be translated 'tempt and test'. The writer refers to the lifelong sufferings of Jesus culminating in what happened at the time of his crucifixion. Jesus still retains the experience of what it was like to suffer.

Amidst difficult circumstances Jesus constantly came under pressure to sin. He was poor. Few people ever understood him, not even his own disciples. His enemies spent their energies trying to get him to say something that would get him into trouble. One of those closest to him betrayed him. When he was arrested Peter denied any allegiance to him. He was put to death and to all human appearance brought his ministry to an end in total failure. He went through physical pain when he carried the cross until he collapsed. He was whipped. He was nailed on the cross. He faced the shame of having his clothes removed, and being hung naked on the cross before his own mother. In all of this Jesus was intensely tempted and tested in a most painful way. This is the very thing that qualifies him to help his own younger brothers and sisters. We confidently expect to reach glory not because of how strong we are but because of the determination of our brother in heaven, who has suffered the very things that we suffer. He is able to bring us along with himself to honour and glory.

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