

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

The Complete Savior (Part 3)

Hebrews 2:10-18

II. A Freeing Savior (2:14-16)

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

I begin this morning a bit heavy and philosophical. One of the foremost preachers of the 19th century in the United States was a man by the name of Phillip Brooks. Perhaps that name sounds familiar to some of you because it is Phillip Brooks who wrote the favorite Christmas Hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” But as simple as that hymn is, consider this thought made by the author of that beloved hymn:

“No man in this world attains to freedom from any slavery except by entrance into some higher servitude. There is no such thing as an entirely free man conceivable.”

In other words, all people’s freedom is bound by servitude to one thing or another. This seems to go against most people’s idea about what freedom actually is. Even Webster’s defines freedom as *“the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action.”* That sounds right enough – that true freedom is the ability of a person to do whatever they want whenever they want without any limitations. The problem is, such a definition of freedom is faulty. If freedom is simply the absence of constraint in my personal choice or action, then if should desire to flap my arms and fly, I should be able to. Now most of you may well say that the preacher has lost his mind, for he should know that it is not in man’s nature or ability to flap his arms and fly. I agree with the notion (not that I have lost my mind) but that it is not in man’s nature to flap his arms and fly, no matter how much he may choose or will to. Therefore, I conclude that man does not have the freedom to fly by flapping his arms and therefore I am not free at all, but bound, bound to this earth. Our definition of freedom then is incorrect.

Therefore, I submit to your consideration the following definition of freedom. Freedom is *“the ability to do that which is consistent with one’s nature or ability”*; or *“not being forced or coerced into doing something contrary to one’s nature or*

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inclination.” It is within my nature to preach to you the word of God and therefore I am exercising freedom to act in a manner consistent with this inclination. I am not being forced to speak this morning, but do so out of both a willingness on my part, and also in obedience or servitude to Jesus Christ. Perhaps upon my prior coming to know Christ as Savior and receiving a call to preach, it might well have been my nature and inclination to sleep in on Sunday and neglect the gathering of the people of God altogether. Did you exercise freedom in coming to church this morning? Is it in your nature now and is it your inclination to desire to fellowship with the saints as you worship the Almighty God?

Our text this morning addresses the issue that the Son of God came to this earth to grant us freedom, that Christ is truly a Freeing Savior. But again, the freedom that Jesus offers a person is not a freedom to do something inconsistent with his nature, but rather a freedom to operate within the bounds of a new set of inclinations, a new set of motivations. Just as we noted last week in Hebrews 2:10-13 that Jesus is a faultless Savior, not having died for man’s sins by accident, but perfectly, completely and consistently fulfilled the plan, purpose and process of God, this morning we are to glean from Hebrews 2:14-16 that Jesus is a freeing Savior, for in Christ a person is freed from having to act in a manner consistent with sinful human nature, a nature that is at war with God, enabling him to now act in a manner consistent with a nature, a new nature, that pleases God (Galatians 5:1, 13, 16-17). Your freedom is bound by the limitations or extent of your new, God-given nature to please Him, a nature that does not want to live for self and does not want to be deceived by the evil one.

So then, this morning, I would like us to examine Hebrews 2:14-16 in this light, seeing Christ as the Freeing Savior. Again, let me reiterate that the first hearers of this letter struggled with the idea of the Son of God being a man, much less a man that actually suffered and died. So, in these verses, we learn yet again and in more detail why Jesus became a man. There are four reasons I see why Jesus became a man in these verses. Let us begin with the first reason.

1. The Son of God became a man to identify with man’s disposition (2:14a)
“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same...”

Our text begins again with that wonderful word “therefore.” The point is - we are to consider everything that has been said up to this point as we go on to our next point. And just what has been the primary emphasis of the book of Hebrews up to this point – the fact that the Son is superior to the angels in that

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He is both God and has become man. And so, in verse 14, we see yet another example of Christ taking on the nature of man.

Our text says that the “children share in flesh and blood.” This is a picture of man’s disposition or nature. All people possess flesh and blood. The word “share” in the Greek is a familiar word *koinnoia* which is often translated as “fellowship” meaning to have in common. So, we learn that it is man’s disposition or nature to be human, to share or have in common with one another a body of flesh. But, by context, I see more than just saying it is the common lot of all people to have flesh and blood. The idea is that humanity also has in common the curse of death. This is the general principle of being human – that one is born, one lives and one dies. Hebrews 9:28, and I would like you to note this, states this principle for us saying,

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment...

As pessimistic as it sounds, this is the lot of humanity – to be human means “to die.” All people “**share**” this mortality. So what does this have to do with why Jesus became a man? We go on in verse 14 to read, “*He Himself likewise partook of the same...*”

Now we are told what Jesus did. Notice that it does not first say that he shared of the same, but rather he partook, or took hold of, the same. The idea behind the word “partook” speaks not of already having something in common, but rather taking upon something in order to have something in common. For example, my wife and I both like baseball, even before we were married. Back in San Diego, we shared a common appreciation for the game and enjoyed going to the ballpark. However, when we got married, I learned that my wife enjoyed figure skating. Now that is something I had no interest in prior to our being married. We did not have that in common. We did not share that interest. But over time, as I have sat down with her to watch figure skating, I have now partaken, or taken hold of her affection for figure skating. So again, to “share” in this context speaks of something that all people have in common for all time, in this case, flesh and blood. To partake in this context speaks of taking hold of something not previously held in common. While the children have always been flesh and blood, Christ, who is God, took upon Himself our humanity, our flesh and blood, not having possessed it before, and thus identifying with our disposition or nature.

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Remember that being human means death. The inevitable result of sin in humanity is that humanity deserves to die. So then, why did Jesus become human? To die. The only way in which God's justice could be eternally served and man given the opportunity to live again with God is for there to be a perfect substitute that could offer an eternal sacrifice or payment for sin. You see, Jesus Christ as God could not die. If Jesus did not die, then salvation could not be offered. In His existence as God, Jesus could not fix man's problem, but as both God and man, Jesus, becoming like us, can fix us. Let me illustrate it this way. Let's say that you take your car into the repair shop because the air conditioning has gone out. As you watch the mechanic look at your car, you notice that in order to repair the car, he brings out a bag of gardening mulch. What might you think? Would you not think that this mechanic is clueless? Obviously there is nothing wrong with the use gardening mulch, if it is used in a garden, but it cannot help a bad air conditioning unit in a car. Why? Because auto parts and gardening mulch are from two different realms. One does not have the capacity to fix or affect the other. Why did Jesus have to become human? Sin had been committed in this realm of humanity and its penalty was imposed in this realm of humanity. Therefore, the Son of God had to become a Son of Man so as to be able to offer the right fix to man's problem. This is why Christ identified with us – to fix us.

2. The Son of God became a man to nullify the works of the devil (2:14b)

"...that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil..."

Now we might ask ourselves the question, why did Jesus take upon Himself this body of flesh and blood? What is the reason and what is the point? This leads us to our second point – the Son of God became a man to nullify the works of the devil.

You see, Satan knows that God's judgment on men for their sin is death. Romans 6:23 tells us the wages of sin is death. And Satan also knows that if he can keep people in this state of sin that they will die and as they die they will forever be out of God's presence and cast into Hell. 1 Corinthians 4:3-4 actually tells us this very thing;

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the

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unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This is the work of the devil, to keep people from seeing the light of the gospel. If God had not purposed for Christ to come and to die for the sins of His people, all men would be blinded to purpose of God to save them and would be eternally lost. So, what does Christ do? He comes in the form of man, in humanity, with its curse of death and He in fact died as a sacrifice for all who would believe. But praise be to God that Jesus did more than just die for our sins; for He also rose again from what? He rose again from the dead. The curse of sinful humanity – that is death – had be broken.

Our text says that ***“through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, he devil.”*** Please note that Jesus is said to “render powerless” the devil. He nullifies, or makes of naught the works of the devil against the elect. You see, the devil is said to have a powerful weapon at his disposal. That weapon is called the “power of death.” What is the “power of death”? It is sin. It is rebellion against God. And as we have already noted, the devil seeks to keep men in such a state because the power of death is sin and the wages of sin is death, or eternal separation from God.

Remember I asked you to keep in mind Hebrews 9:27. Let’s look at that verse again only let’s include verse 28 as well this time.

Hebrews 9:27-28

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Look at verse 28 closely. Christ has been offered once, as man, put to death, for the sins of many. The work of Satan is to influence and multiply the sins of men to keep them from God. But look at what the work of Christ actually accomplishes. For Jesus will come a second time, bringing final salvation, without reference to what – to sin. The first time Christ came was in reference to sin – He became human to die for our sins, at state in which the devil seeks to keep men in. The second time Christ comes will not be reference to sin, for when He comes and when we see Him, 1 John 3:2 tells us “we will be like Him.” That is without sin – that is holy, righteous, perfect and so desirously wanting to live for, love and worship God. To borrow a phrase, *“The Son of God became*

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the Son of man so that the sons of man may become the sons of God.” The devil’s ability to blind the eyes of the elect has been rendered ineffective.

3. The Son of God became a man to modify man’s perspective of death (2:15)

“...and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

This brings us then to our third point. The Son of God became a man to modify man’s perspective of death. Here is where we see the true freedom that Christ came to bring. Do not forget that to be human means what? To die. I submit to you that what all mankind in general fears the most is death. Just as dying is part of fallen humanity, so to is a innate “fear of death.” It is generally true that unbelievers, and sometimes even believers, have a “fear of death.” We must know that the “fear of death” spoken here in verse 15 is the inevitable result of being under the power of death, that is sin. For apart from outright denial, there are very few people apart from Christ that welcome death. No, rather they fear death.

And why should a person fear death? There are at least five reasons why people fear death:

1. The fear of pain – we do not want to suffer (although medically speaking, most deaths are not painful).
2. The fear of separation – from what we know and those we love
3. The fear of the unknown – What awaits us on the other side?
4. The fear of non-being – Is there life after death at all?
5. The fear of eternal punishment.

It is this last point that I wish to emphasize. I believe that even within fallen humanity, people do have an innate sense of divine judgment. How many people upon their deathbeds have expressed desires to “make peace with God,” implying that they have been at war with them all their lives? How many people upon the encroaching presence of death seek to be reconciled with family or friends. It is far more common that uncommon.

Man does have a sense of the reality of judgment. This is why Jesus taught so prolifically on the subject of Hell. Hell is a place of conscious punishment for all of have rejected or ignored Christ. And if you would indulge

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me for just a moment, let remind you of two important truths regarding Hell that every person needs to know.

1. Hell is eternal -

Matthew 25:46 – *“These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

One cannot rightly speak of a literal place called heaven and eternal life if they do not also acknowledge a literal place called hell and eternal punishment.

2. Hell is a place of continual torment – Luke 16:28

It is a place of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:3) and a place where the “worm does not die” (Mark 9:48). Revelation 14:9-11 describes hell this way:

Revelation 14:9-11

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

This is the reality and the horrors of hell. This is what awaits the person who either rejects Christ or even dares to ignore Him. This is why people fear death – because of the impending sense and reality of judgment. But our text tells us that Christ came to free us from the “fear of death.” Praise the Lord. You see, for the believer, rather than fearing death, we can now welcome it. Is this not the testimony of the Word of God?

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

55 “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

You see, the believe need not fear death, for the price of his eternal punishment has been paid in full by Christ. Remember our definition of freedom - *“the ability to do that which is consistent with one’s nature or ability”; or “not being forced or coerced into doing something contrary to one’s nature or inclination.”* You see, it is against an unbeliever’s nature not to fear death. In fact, an unbeliever is acting in complete freedom to fear death, for it is consistent with their nature to do so. But the unbeliever has been given a modified perspective on death. Rather than an enemy to be feared, death is simply the being ushered in to the presence of God to live in peace and eternal bliss.

It is the fear of death that holds unbelievers in slavery all their lives. People are born into the condition of sin, the condition of sin leads them to be sinners and being sinners leads to the fear of death, the fear of eternal and divine punishment. Yet for the believer, what is to be feared by death? As 2 Corinthians 5:8 states:

...we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Therefore, let the words of Psalm 16:11 encourage your soul if you know the freeing Savior:

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

May this be the perspective you have of death. And if it is not, may the Lord open your eyes to see the freeing power of Jesus to so possess such a view – to look so forward to the life and bliss of being in the eternal presence of God that your life is affected day by day.

4. The Son of God became a man to clarify redeemed man’s destiny (2:16)
“For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.”

This leads well into our final point found in verse 16. Why did Jesus become a man? To clarify redeemed man’s destiny. There are some important

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lessons to learn from this verse. First, note that God is under no obligation to save anyone. Our text states that **“He does not give help to angels...”** The phrase “give help” means “to reach out and give aid.” In Matthew 14:31, as Peter begins to sink after attempting to walk on the water, Jesus rescues him. Jesus reaches out and takes hold of him – He saves Peter. No such salvation has been offered to the angels. The angels’ fate are sealed, with a third condemned to hell. Christ could have become an angel and sought the salvation of the fallen angels, but He did not. But He did become a man and by grace offers salvation, offers eternal aid to the soul of those who will believe and trust in Him as the freeing Savior. Jesus does offer such aid, He does give help to the descendent of Abraham.

An just who is the descendent of Abraham. Obviously it does speak in the immediate context of the book of Hebrews, to believing Jews. But it also speaks of all who become spiritually the descendent of Abraham by exercising faith in the promised Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. For if you believe in Christ, you are a spiritual child of Abraham and will receive the spiritual benefits of such a belief, which is eternal life.

I close then with a statement from one of the old church catechisms. I pray that this may express your desire and your experience as having come into a real relationship with the freeing Savior. The Heidelberg Catechism asks -

Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

May we find our freedom in total servitude to Jesus Christ!

Soli Deo Gloria

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