

Christ Our Liberator

Hebrews 2:14-16

10 July 2022

Halifax, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Please turn to the book of Hebrews.

- We are working our way through this book pretty much verse by verse.
- We are doing this because, like every book in the Bible, it is God's holy word that though addressed to particular people at the time, was written to be of use to the church in every succeeding age.
- As the Apostle Paul says, the Scriptures are able to make us wise to salvation—to show us all about salvation—our need for salvation, how God goes about saving us, how we are to embrace His salvation, and so on.

This makes the Bible to be very important for all people.

- The Lord has commanded us to preach it—what I am doing right now—to all nations and all people everywhere.
- It is the corresponding duty of everyone to listen and to be eager to learn what God our Maker has revealed—to recognise that we are not right with God—and to seek His salvation.
- He tells us that those who seek will find—He will see to it that His word gets to them.
 - And once it does, He has commanded that those who receive His salvation would be diligent to continue to hear His word preached for the rest of their lives that they might continue in His salvation and in community with the people who have embraced salvation. They must not neglect it lest they drift away.

So here we are as a church, hearing preaching from the book of Hebrews.

- I chose this particular book because it sets forth the value of Christ against all other contenders so that we might be encouraged to follow Him wholeheartedly.
- It is written to the Hebrew (or Jewish) believers who were opposed by their own people for following Jesus, much as Christians have been opposed ever since.
- We live in a time and place where we once enjoyed a pretty good reception—there were so many who believed—but because of our slackness and ingratitude as believers, we are increasingly experiencing opposition in our society.
 - That's just the way it was for the Hebrews who had drifted so far from their faithful service to God as those who were to bring the Messiah into the world, that they were, as the prophets had actually predicted, the people who crucified Him.
 - This made it hard for those who loved the Lord and rejoiced when the Messiah came. They had to face the cold opposition of their fellow Hebrews, many who were still quite religious in an outward way and mocked those who believed.
- Yes, I chose this book because it was written to people like us to help us see how good and right it is to serve Christ when we are among those who increasingly reject Him.
 - He and His way are better than any other and it is essential that we cling to Him!

Let me say a bit about what we have already seen about Him in this book of Hebrews.

- First, we saw that when Jesus came in the flesh, God spoke to us in a way that was better than any way that He had ever spoken to His people before.
 - Before, He spoke by prophets, and while they gave us God’s word without error, God’s full revelation came when He spoke to us by His Son!
 - Moses and the other prophets told us what God required and they told us something of what God would do to save us, but Jesus actually did it!
 - He was the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person because He Himself was the very Son of God, and He was the one who saves us.
- In chapter 2, we saw that because God has spoken to us so clearly and so powerfully through Him, we will not be able to escape if we neglect Him.
 - That’s what I was just saying when I explained the reason we do this preaching thing—preaching about Christ who was revealed to us.
- As we moved on in chapter 2, we saw in verses 5-9 how Jesus is the one who restored dominion to man—the dominion over all things created that had been lost in the fall.
 - Although we don’t see everything brought under man’s feet yet, we see Jesus raised from the dead to sit at God’s right hand until the time comes for all things be brought under His feet and those who believe enabled to reign with Him.
- Last week, we came to verse 10, where it speaks about something that Christians always get ridiculed about—that we follow a Saviour who was rejected and who suffered and died on the cross.
 - We saw in that passage that it was perfectly fitting for Him to do this because God chose to make Him the Saviour we need (to perfect Him for that need) through His suffering.
 - We saw that God made Him one with those He came to save and bring to glory—
 - And that instead of being ashamed of us, He owned us as His brothers and played the part of a brother who comes to redeem His own.
 - By rescuing us, He gains honour rather than shame even though His enemies refuse to acknowledge this and cast reproach on Him as either a helpless victim or one who died for His own sin.
 - As those who know the truth, we ought to never be embarrassed or ashamed of Him as a suffering Saviour. We ought rather to glory and boast in His cross.

The passage we come to today continues this theme.

- The passage last week closed with Him saying about the people He saves, “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me,” proving that He counts us as His brothers and as God’s children.
- And now v. 14, where we begin today, speaks of us as “the children” He comes to save.
 - Here—I will read the passage we are looking at to you now... Heb 2:14-16:

Heb 2:14-16: Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the

devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

Thanks be to God for his Holy Word. May He bless us as we consider it now.

From this text, we will look at three wonderful things:

- First, at how Jesus comes to us from where He was to rescue us.
- Second, at how our ordeal is here described.
- Third, at how He achieves our rescue.

- Let's begin with the first thing.

I. See how Jesus comes to us to rescue us.

A. We may compare Him here to a prince who sees our distress and goes to great lengths to come and save us.

1. Many of our stories, ancient and modern, have this theme of the hero who arises to save his people.
 - We can read of the Greek heroes, the Knights of the Round Table, or our modern heroes like Batman.
2. In these stories, we see how the hero has to overcome all sorts of barriers to get to the one or the ones he is rescuing.
 - His exploits reveal his commitment, his wisdom, his poise, his strength, and sometimes his love for the ones he rescues.

B. But none of the heroes in our stories are equal with Jesus.

1. We are told in the first verse that we read, Hebrews 2:14, that
 - **“inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part in the same.”**
 - He actually had to become a true human being forever—just like us, except without sin—
 - without sin, but still subjected to the miseries that have come upon us because of sin—flesh and blood that is now subject to death.
 - The word *likewise—that He likewise took part in the same*—suggests that He not only took on our nature, but also our condition.
 - Again, not that He became a sinner, but that He was subjected to the hardships and miseries that sin brought upon man.

➤ How could He get from where He was to where we are?

2. Talk about overcoming barriers to get to us!

- To rescue us, He had to come from His throne of glory as the Son of God to poor lowly worms of flesh and blood.
 - He was a pure Spirit from all eternity, without body, without limitations, without anything created; and He became one who was confined to a human body and spirit, who had but a human brain, who had to learn and grow, who was limited in strength, who was subject to weariness, pain, and death.
- The way He and His Father devised was for Him to be born of a virgin.
 - In that way, He was true flesh and blood, but by not having a human father, He was not born with a sinful nature as we are.

- When He was conceived, a new person was not brought into being, but the Son of God rather became also a human person—so that it was Him in our nature—really and truly.
 - He did not (could not) cease to be God, but He became also man.
 - What wisdom in the divine counsels to make this happen, and what power by the Spirit to form His body of the substance of a woman but without a human father.
3. But going from where He was to where we are was a marvel not only in that He and His Father found a way for Him to do it, but in that He was willing to do it.
- Why would He, for lowly creatures who had rebelled, wish to humble Himself and become a partaker of flesh and blood to rescue us?
 - We were in our state of ruin through our own rebellion against Him and against His Father.
 - We did not deserve to be rescued at all—and especially not by Him who had to become to so low—who had to become flesh and blood to do it.
 - The Greeks had no concept of any of their gods doing anything like this!
 - Nor did the Romans. Their gods were more like powerful people who too were busy looking out for their own interests to do anything like that.
 - And the Jews who knew the glory of God could not conceive of Him coming among us as one of us to die, even though their prophets foretold it.
 - Such love cannot be conceived—
 - It is too high for us.
 - Such mercy to the undeserving!
 - Such grace that such efforts should be made and such barriers overcome to save us!
- But why did we need to be rescued?
- That is the second thing I want to show you.

II. See how our ordeal is described here.

- Note that there are different ways that our need for salvation is described in the Bible. This is to help us understand more fully how much we need Jesus.
 - We should cling to Him not only because He is so excellent a Saviour, but also because our need to be saved is so great.
 - In this particular text, we see two things about our ordeal from which Christ came to rescue us.
 - Look from the middle of verse 14 where we see that Jesus became flesh and blood that through death: **“He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, (v. 15) and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**
 - So there is this devil with the power of death that Jesus destroys...
 - And there is this bondage that we are under because of the fear of death.
- A. Let’s first look at this bondage we were under because of the fear of death (v. 15).

1. This is a terrible bondage brought on by sin.
 - God's law declares plainly that the wages of sin is death—that the sinful soul shall die. The Bible also tells us that we have all sinned.
 - Death is penal in nature—there is punishment in it—it is not just the cessation of life—it is condemnation.
 - This means that in death we will face judgment and as far as we are concerned, there is no way for us to escape.
 - Adam is the tree from which we all come as branches, and once he sinned, we were all a corrupt tree that could only produce corrupt fruit.
 - And so death passed upon all men because together in Adam, we all sinned.
 - The law has an iron grip upon us. It holds us tightly.
 - It is God's law and it cannot be set aside or minimised. It is just and holy.
2. This fear of death is a mighty fear.
 - We know that God is holy—He is a consuming fire.
 - We are guilty of opposing Him.
 - It is such a wretched thing to oppose Him, that all that can be expected is His wrath and fiery indignation that devours His adversaries.
 - It is the prospect of everlasting darkness, of torments in body and soul without intermission forever and ever.
 - Those who know the reality of this fear of death are in terrible bondage until they are recused.
 - They cannot shake it off because they know that God's wrath is both real and just, and they know that they do not have the resources to deal with it.
 - It haunts them so much that if the truth be told, they never fully face it until they find the remedy because they can't bear to fully face it.
3. Indeed, the general population of men find all sorts of ways to avoid it—ways that are often ridiculous in the extreme.
 - a. One will find comfort by comparing himself to others and finding those who are worse sinners—as if that can have any effect on God's sentence of condemnation. Did He not say that there is none righteous, no not one?
 - b. Another will find relief from the fear of death by losing himself in the confusion of idolatry—
 - He will say, how do I know what the real God is like? He may be more of an impersonal force, or perhaps He is more like us than like the God you are talking about who condemns sinners.
 - Yes, men have been busy making up gods, making idols, but they are all just twists and distortions of the true God to avoid this fear of death.
 - There is no rest in idols, but many try to rest here.
 - c. There are those who dodge the fear of death by supposing that God can be appeased by rituals...
 - If ceremonies are done—even baptism and the Lord's Supper—if prayers are said, church is attended—then they delude themselves that all will be well.

- d. Still others try to avoid the fear of death by numbing themselves.
 - One uses drugs, another drink, another food, another gaming, another entertainment, another work, another success, another music, another relationships, another sex, another education and perhaps another morality—
 - Often their numbing devices themselves bring them into bondage so that they are warped and twisted by them and cannot escape—drugs.
 - Some have more respectable diversions and some less so...
 - But if they deny the penal nature of death, there is little difference between them. In the end, each is running from God.
- 4. But I would say again that the ones Christ recues from the fear of death are, oddly enough, the ones who cannot shake the fear of death...
 - They reach the point where they accept that death is penal—that it is punishment from God for their sin—and that there is nothing they can do to escape it by their own power.
 - They find relief only through Jesus Christ as He is offered to sinners in the gospel. They glory in His cross.
- I will have more to say about that in a moment.
- B. But first let's look at the devil that is mentioned—this devil who has the power of death!
 1. How can that be? God is the one who sentences us to death and who appointed it for the sinful soul.
 - It was God who declared that if Adam ate from the tree he would surely die.
 - It is God who says that the wages of sin is death.
 - How does Satan have the power of death?
 2. Satan has the power of death in these ways:
 - a. First, Satan is said to have the power of death because he is the one who led the human race to sin.
 - It was his great desire to do so and he did so.
 - He is called the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning.
 - Knowing that God had declared that the sinful soul shall die, he told us that it was in rebellion that we would find life.
 - And he is still telling us that.
 - You can see this more and more in our society as we pull away from God more and more.
 - This is why we celebrate sin—our modern philosophy is that man finds freedom and maturity by doing what God says is sinful...
 - Killing our unborn children—and those that are born as well.
 - Having sex outside of marriage—and with whomever we want.
 - Why does forbidden sex have such a strong appeal to people?
 - So Satan, by leading us into sin, has us where he wants us,

- in rebellion against God and condemned to penal death with no way to escape.
 - That is the principal way that the power over death belongs to him.
- b. And once he got man in this place of bondage to death, he took his place as their prince. That is the second way he has the power of death.
- In Eph 2:2, he is called **“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, just like the others.”**
 - He leads them in their rebellion.
 - In John, there are three times that Jesus calls him “the ruler of this world.”
 - Once man rejected God, he became a servant of Satan.
 - Satan has the power of death by which he leads men along in the ways of death.
 - You can see the death culture—it promotes death—fornication, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, suicide, altering your mind with drugs (which always inhibit brain function).
- c. Satan also wields the power of death by using it to drive men away from God.
- We meet many today who, when you explore, have rejected God because of the misery that is in the world—because we are sentenced to death
 - They ask the diabolical question (straight from Satan) of how a good God could allow all the suffering that is in the world.
 - They act as if we are innocent and as if the suffering brought on us by God is unjust.
 - Instead of realising that it is a fitting response to sin and repenting, they pretend that God is the one who is in the wrong and they reject Him as if they did not come from Him.
 - In this way, Satan tries to prevent them from turning to Christ.
- d. Fourth, scripture shows us that Satan is the executioner who is able to inflict death upon men.
- We see, for example, in Job, how he sought permission to afflict Job and was granted it—and how he was behind the death of Job’s children.
 - Likewise, in the New Testament, he is the one who is called the destroyer who executed those in Israel that apostatised by their complaints against God.

TRANS> So you see then the ordeal from which we need to be rescued.

- That we are in bondage because of the fear of death and that the devil is our prince who leads us in the ways of death unless we are rescued by Jesus Christ.

III. Now I want to show you how He rescues us.

A. We are told straight out: He dies.

- Look again at verse 14 & 15: **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might**

destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

- He partook of flesh and blood so that He might die—
 - It was by dying that He destroyed the evil and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
- On the face of it, this seems quite absurd.
 - As His tormentors said when they saw Him dying on the cross, “How can He save others if He cannot save Himself?”
- Yet, we see Him as He is revealed in the gospels moving toward death.
 - Over and over He told His disciples that He was going to die—even though it gave them great distress and bewilderment at the time to hear Him say it.
 - He speaks of Himself as coming to give His life—as in our text.
 - It is remarkable that when a crowd of His admirers sought to make Him king by force, He hid from them and would not allow it (see John 6).
 - But when His enemies came to take Him by force to crucify Him, He went most willingly.
- Our text says it plainly:
 - **Inasmuch then as the children** [those He came to save] **have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**
 - Clearly the method of rescuing us is death.

B. How so?

1. We saw it back in verse 9—that He tasted death (fully experienced it) for everyone [all of the sons He brings to glory—the children that God has given Him].
 - He died in their place.
2. Think this through by considering what it says in verse 14 and 15.
 - Jesus became like the people He came to save so that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death and release them from bondage.
 - He put Himself into their condition so that through death He could destroy the devil who had the power of death and release them from what they feared in death.
 - What was their condition that He put Himself into when He partakes of flesh and blood like them?
 - They were sentenced to death as a penalty.
 - Do you see?
 - Jesus put Himself into the place of those condemned to die.
 - Jesus died to bear the penalty of death for them so they would not have to bear it.
 - They still die, but as the Bible tells us elsewhere, the stinger is taken out of death.

- The stinger of death is death as the punishment for sin.
 - If Jesus takes that punishment, He takes the sting out of death.
 - Then death becomes a passage not from here to God's wrath but from here to God's glorious favour and blessing.
3. Do you see how this destroys the devil (that name *devil* means *accuser*).
- Think this through as well.
 - Satan has power over death only when he can accuse people who must pay the penalty of death.
 - But what can he do when Jesus has paid the penalty for them in full?
 - He has no power through death.
 - I should mention that the word *destroy* that is used when it says that Jesus destroys the devil does not mean to annihilate him.
 - The word *destroy* means to make null and void, to render ineffective or powerless.
 - The power of death is removed because Christ bore that death.
 - It is ironic to think that when Satan and his own gloated over Christ when they were putting Him to death, they did not realise that they were actually bringing salvation to His people!
 - Satan was rendering himself powerless as the one who had brought God's people under the sentence of death.
 - Now they were released.
- And of course you can see that too...
4. That it was also through death that the sons Jesus came to save were released from bondage through the fear of death (vs 15).
- Part of God's work in them to bring them to Jesus was to make them be those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
 - He caused them to come to see that all their life they had been condemned and sentenced to the dreadful penal death that I have spoken about today.
 - They come to see that when others deny it and avoid it.
 - When it speaks of *all their lifetime*, it doesn't mean that they were tormented by the fear of death for their whole life—it means that they come to realise that they were, nevertheless, justly condemned since their conception and only able to be freed through the death of Jesus in their place.
 - That is one of the things that distinguishes them from those who are not the true children of God, not sons brought to glory.
 - They see clearly that only through the death of Jesus can they be saved.

C. Consider how great the love of Jesus is!

1. That He should come from glory as the Son of God to die for guilty sinners who were justly condemned!
 - There is no love like His love.

- He had born the penalty of death so that now, for those who believe, death is nothing to fear—
 - Not because we deny our condemnation, but because Jesus has borne our condemnation that we might be set free who trust in Him.
- 2. Verse 16 highlights His love and how it is undeserved by pointing out that He did not lay hold of angels to save them—but that He came as the seed of Abraham, a true descendant of the one to whom the promise of salvation was given.
 - 2000 years before Jesus came, Abraham was told that through a Son born to him salvation would be brought to all nations.
 - It was not for angels, but for men that Jesus came.
 - What is the difference between us and them?
 - What is the difference between us and those who are busy this day denying that they are justly condemned to a penal death?
 - The difference is that Jesus came to save us.
 - If you see your need, there is nothing stopping you from trusting in Jesus today. He promises that whoever trusts in Him will be saved.
 - If you do not see your need, then I urge you to stop playing games and face the truth.
 - We are all condemned sinners and Jesus is the only Saviour.
 - You will get nowhere dying it.
 - Turn to Him believing and you will be saved.
 - If you have already turned to Him, continue wholeheartedly in Him.