

Jesus is committed to his family

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[0 : 0 0] was tempted. He is able to help those who are being tempted. So, Jesus is totally committed to His family. I read a story this week, the testimony, I guess, of a Christian mom who adopted two orphan girls when they were in sort of middle primary years. And it was a very honest account of some of the difficulties. She said that as parents, they were in a fierce battle for their hearts. These kids had already seen things and learned certain behaviors in early years, and they needed to learn to trust and to be guided by these new parents who wanted to love them and show them a better way. This mom said adoption is a brutally honest teacher in their experience, not so much about competent caregiving, but about how little we know our own darkness, and mostly about the amazing journey God undertook to bring us into His family. So, she was reflecting on her own family experience and thinking about the gospel and thinking about all that God does for His people in our darkness and sin. And she reflected on the hard days and the difficult days as a family, and it sounds like there were and probably are many. And she said this, she said, what holds us together is not our children's performance. What holds us together is that we committed to love them before they even realized that they were ours. In adoption, the relationship starts and is sustained by the ones who start it. That would be the important truth.

The Bible says adoption is so crucial to our understanding of the gospel, God's gift to us. John Murray, a Scottish theologian, says adoption is the apex, the high point of grace and privilege. And I think here the author to the Hebrews is inviting us to look at it from God's point of view. What was the cost to God in adopting people into His family? So, we're invited to see in a variety of ways the costly journey of Jesus to save His people. We are reminded of the eternal commitment of God to call His people into His family, and we are certainly reminded of the grace of God that both starts and sustains the relationship between God and His people. You probably saw that the section is full of family language. Verse 10, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory. Verse 11, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. Verse 14, since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity.

So, it's emphasizing both that Jesus became one of us to save us, but it's also emphasizing that He did all that to make His people children of God, to give us that privilege of being in God's family. If we remember our context, why is this letter being written? There is a fierce battle for these people's hearts going on. There's a fierce battle for our hearts going on. In the context here, it was suffering in opposition making them wonder, should we stick with Jesus or should we go back to the old ways? Perhaps we recognize something of that battle in our own lives. And what this section does is it calls us again to trust Jesus our Savior, to worship the God who sustains faith, who sustains His family of faith? Ultimately, God would want our hearts to be one, to be captivated, to be captured by seeing once again the commitment of Jesus our Savior to redeem us and bring us home. So, we're going to see four ways in which Jesus is committed. I'm going to do it before my voice breaks up, I hope. Verse 10, Jesus is committed to suffering for His family. It's a lovely verse because it shows us the Father's heart.

[4 : 3 9] The Father's desire is to bring many sons and daughters to glory. In verse 9, which we thought about two weeks ago now, there was the idea that Jesus tasted death for His people, but now He is crowned with glory and honor in heaven. And what we're discovering now is that Jesus the Son shares that glory with His children, with His brothers and sisters. Perhaps that raises the question in our mind, well, how can people like us, we know our own hearts, our lives, how can sinful, rebellious, wayward people like us enjoy and share glory with Jesus and honor in heaven? That's why the author reminds us of the Father's plan. And notice that he says it was a fitting plan, a plan that fits with the character and purposes of God, a plan when we think about the cross that shows both the holiness of God, the perfect justice of God, but also His love and His grace and His

mercy. Now, what is the plan?

The plan is that Jesus, the pioneer of salvation, would suffer death for the sake of His people. Here is Jesus the pioneer. He is the trailblazer. He is the one that opens the way to God. He is the only one who can open the way back to God. And for Him to do that, He needs to go on a journey. And that journey involves Him suffering death for the salvation of sinners. And it's remarkable as we recognize the fact that so many people look at the cross and think it's folly. When God looks at the cross, He says it's fitting. It's fitting because it demonstrates His holiness and justice. But He does deal with sin. He cannot sweep it under the carpet, but it shows His love because He sends His own Son. And Jesus is willing to come and pay the penalty, take the price, face the judgment that His people deserve, so that we might know love and forgiveness and eternal life.

Later in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2, there's that famous verse, Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame. And because Jesus was willing to endure the cross, to scorn its shame, because of the glory that was set before Him, knowing that it would bring His family to glory, that's the basis for our hope and our joy, isn't it? Because of Jesus' commitment to make that journey to the cross, we can have hope of our eternal reward.

You've perhaps been reading or at least seeing some of the interviews that have been going on with Olympic medalists as they've been making their way back to the country. One that was particularly interesting to me was the guy Tom Dean, the swimmer who won a couple of gold medals.

[7 : 43] And in the interview that he was giving, he said, well, if I won two, my mum deserves three. And he went on to explain that for years, his mum has got up at five o'clock in the morning and driven him for hours to his swimming practice before then heading back to London for her job in the city. And she was doing that for the last eight years while being a single parent with other children, other responsibilities. And so, here is a Tom Dean gold medalist, and he's recognizing the sacrifice of that journey day after day. Of course, it's rewarded with those gold medals. But in a much greater way, don't we see the cross of Jesus as the journey of ultimate costly sacrifice? Not just a little bit of time, a little bit of energy, but giving his own life.

Knowing that for him beyond it, there was glory, knowing that it would bring many sons and daughters to glory. That's the reward for all who trust in Jesus. The people that received the letter of the Hebrews, they were discouraged and they were doubting.

Maybe today we are discouraged and we are doubting. What should we learn? We should learn once again to look to Jesus, shouldn't we? To see once again his commitment to suffer for the salvation of his people.

To know that we can trust him. We can trust him to keep us no matter what. So, Jesus is committed to suffering for his family. But we see another aspect of Jesus' commitment. We see Jesus is committed to solidarity with his family. In verses 11 to 13, he's committed to standing with his family. The focus in these verses is just how strongly Jesus identifies with his own people, with his church. That they are a part of his family. That Jesus can say that he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. Bear in mind that Jesus is being presented as, in verse 11, the one who makes people holy.

[10 : 06] Here we're being reminded that Jesus is the Son of God, that in and of himself he is totally pure and perfect. He is in a different moral category to any of us. But Jesus has also been made holy. He's been set apart by his Father for his mission, for his mission to save people from sin. His work is to make people holy. To set others apart as belonging to God. To set the church apart as God's possession is God's people. That's why the Christians in the New Testament are often described as saints, sanctified, set apart, holy ones. And here is this reminder that Jesus has bound himself to his church in his mission. And to make that point clear, the author to the Hebrews goes back, as he so often does, goes back to the Old Testament. He brings us three different quotes from the Old Testament to draw this out. So, in verse 12, he quotes from the end of Psalm 22. He says,

I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters. In the assembly, I will sing your praises. Psalm 22 was one of those psalms that was, for a long time, read and sung messianically, sung anticipating God's Messiah, God's Savior coming. This king who would identify with his people, who would suffer and die for his people, but beyond that, who would know deliverance and victory and triumph.

That's why we sang those different sections, to see that movement. And here, the author to the Hebrews draws on that sense of victory. Here is King Jesus, and he's leading his spiritual family in worship of God, in trust of God. And then, in verse 13, we see a couple of different quotes from Isaiah chapter 8. Again, I will put my trust in him. That was from verse 17. And again, he says, here am I in the children God has given me. That was from verse 18. So, verse 17 there is saying, you know, those were Isaiah's words, I will put my trust in God. But here, they're being put into the mouth of Jesus. Here is Jesus saying, as the Son of God, I will trust my Father. Jesus is the model of what absolute trust in God looks like. And isn't that what we see when we read the Gospels? Jesus trusting His Father's Word, His Father's ways, His Father's will. And then, in verse 18, here am I in the children God has given me. In its original context, this is Isaiah saying, me and my sons, we are on mission for God. We are bringing a message from God. Together, Isaiah is linked with his sons in serving God. And now here, as it's applied to Jesus, again, it's getting that message across that we are united with Him. He is united with His spiritual sons and daughters, that the church together with Jesus are called to serve God, to trust God, and to live for God. So, Jesus stands with His family in solidarity.

And that takes us to that really powerful, wonderful, I think, statement at the end of verse 11. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

[13:55] I don't know if many of you want, I don't even know if it's still on, but the TV show, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, in which celebrities would discover something of their family tree. And there were a few episodes that really stuck out in the public imagination because celebrities discovered really surprising things from their family tree. Perhaps most famously, Ainsley Harriet, the TV chef, he discovered that back in the 18th century, his family in Jamaica had kept slaves.

That was a big shock, understandably, for him. But I wonder if we take it to our own lives, whether we can enter into that sense of families having skeletons in the closet, whether there's the black sheep in your family. Some of us may have been or may even still be the black sheep in our own family. It can often be that members of our family cause us discomfort or even a sense of shame. But here's the beauty of the gospel. It's that Jesus, who is God, and as God, he knows the very worst about us, our hearts, our thoughts, our actions, past, present, future, all laid bare before him. He knows those things that we are deeply ashamed of and we hope that nobody ever discovers about us. He knows the ways in which we have brought shame on our holy God. And yet, when our faith is in Jesus, he meets us with honor and not shame. We see in Jesus one who is committed to love and to welcome us. We see in our Father one of generous grace, one who never turns his back on us.

Think about what Jesus is doing now for his church, right now for you. If you're a Christian, what's Jesus doing? He's praying for you and he's giving the Spirit to you. And Jesus is committed to bring his family home because he's committed to solidarity with his family.

[16:27] That becomes really important for at least some of us and some Christians in their own experiences. So again, this week, I came across a pastor in New York City by the name of Bernard Howard.

And again, he was telling the story of growing up as a young Jewish man. And then in his teenage years, he became a follower of Jesus. And one of the first things that happened is he became a follower of Jesus in the Jewish community with a Jewish family as he was cut off by his grandmother.

For years, she wouldn't speak to him. And that was true of other relatives and other friends also. And he understood, and perhaps we have come to understand that following Jesus means we will stick out. And sometimes that will lead to separation.

And then this man, Bernard Howard, he then addressed the question, well, why go through that? Why face being isolated from your family? And he said, well, if Jesus is God's eternal King, and if we are to enjoy life in God's kingdom, to enjoy his perfect rule forever, then following Jesus is worth it regardless of cause, since he is who he says he is.

And wonderfully for him, and perhaps for us as well, he discovered that while he experienced the loss of family, he knew the gain of another family, the Christian family, the church, and knowing Jesus.

[18:02] And who is Jesus? He's a friend who sticks closer than any brother. We discover in Jesus one who is perfectly loyal. He is loyal to God's plan of salvation. He never wavers. And Jesus is perfectly loyal to his church because we are his family. We're his brothers and sisters. And so, as

we think about Jesus' loyalty to us, in response, are we ready to show some of that same loyalty to him as our Savior and Lord?

Are we ready to stick with him, even if that means we stick out? Because Jesus is committed to solidarity with his family. Let's move from there to verses 14 and 15, and what we see there, again, wonderful truth, Jesus is committed to saving his family. So, for those of us who have been here, most of us have been here as we've gone through Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 1 very much focused on Jesus as the Son of God.

But then Hebrews chapter 2 focuses much more on Jesus as fully human. And there's a mystery there, isn't there? Jesus fully God and Jesus fully man. But it's a mystery that we need to understand the gospel. And here we see it being worked out in this way. Verse 14 of Hebrews 2, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. So, there's a picture here that people outside of Jesus, we are held as slaves, slaves to the power of death and to the fear of death.

We might think of it as slavery, we might think of it as a hostage situation, but one in which there is no freedom, where there is constant threat and where there is ongoing fear. Now, notice that the text tells us that the devil holds the power of death. And it's important for us to understand that that's not ultimate power because that belongs to God, but we do know from the Bible that what does the devil do? He influences people away from God and towards sin. And we know from the Bible that the wages of sin is death. So, the devil holds the power of death as he would seek to draw us away from faith and trust and obedience towards disobedience and walking away from God and into continued slavery.

And with that comes, verse 15, the fear of death. And isn't that our ultimate fear as people?

[20 : 58] For as much as modern life would distract us, so we're always busy and always living in lots of little moments and we maybe don't always think about sort of the big questions. And even as much as modern life so often shelters us from death, because so often people don't die in their own homes surrounded by family like it used to happen. People die perhaps in hospitals or hospices more often.

And even as we recognize within the medical community and within scientific community that some even think that it's possible to defeat in some way death. Still, death remains both our great enemy and our great fear.

Robert Neill, back in the 70s, wrote a book called *The Art of Dying*. And he talked about the things that people typically fear. Now, we fear often the loss of control associated with death and death and dying. Losing control of our body perhaps. Losing control of important decisions which are passed on to loved ones. For many, there is the fear of life ending with a sense of incompleteness, failure, things left undone. Perhaps for most, and the most pressing fear is that fear of separation from loved ones. I think we could add to his list that the fear of the unknown, we simply do not know what it is like. And here we're also reminded that without Christ there is that fear that gnaws on people of condemnation when we face God and His judgment.

The Bible is an honest book. Christianity is an honest faith, and it recognizes that this fear is real. And it facing up to the reality of the power of death and the fear of death becomes really important for then appreciating for us the good news of the gospel. Why did Jesus come?

Now, we discover that the only way to have the power of death broken is by Jesus dying in our place. And the only way for Jesus to die is for Him to take on full humanity. Jesus became one of us to die for us because that's the only way for the power of death and the fear of death to be broken.

The only way for us to be released from that slavery is for Jesus to come and to take our place. Jesus, by His resurrection, has, as it were, defanged death. The poison of death is removed. When our faith is in Jesus, death has been defanged. Perhaps on TV, maybe some of us even in person have seen snake charmers working.

[24 : 14] Or maybe we've been to places where snake handling happens, and that can be a really scary thing to watch, a scary thing to do. But often, especially if it's snake handling, we're told, well, don't worry, they've been defanged. The poison has been removed. They could bite, but that bite would not be harmful or destructive. The same is true for the believer because Jesus has defanged death. Now, how does the commitment of Jesus to die to save us help us to face death? Well, it says to us we don't need to fear the loss of control because as Christians, we're invited to give control to Jesus as Lord and Master each and every day, to entrust ourselves to Jesus in our lives

and with our death.

We don't need to fear incompleteness because we understand by faith that death is not the end for us. Rather, it is the entry into eternal life. And the Bible tells us in so many ways that as people, regardless of who we are and what we've accomplished, we are complete, truly complete, when we know God by faith in Jesus. As Christians, we don't need to live with the dread fear of separation. Remember those wonderful words of Jesus in John 14 to disciples who were troubled by Jesus' own impending death. He said, don't let your hearts be troubled. He talked about his father's house. He said, I'm going there to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I'll certainly come back and take you to be with me that you might be where I am. Jesus will bring all his people to his father's house, and we will share that house with all those we have loved who also had their faith in Jesus. We'll be together forever with the family of Christ, with our friends and family who we have known and loved in this life.

We will know and love them for eternity and worship our Savior together. When our faith is in Jesus, we don't need to fear the unknown, because Jesus has gone into death, has gone through death, has gone ahead of us into resurrection life, and he invites us to look to him and to understand that he walks with us daily until he takes us home. So, Jesus is committed to saving his family, and Jesus finally is committed to serving his family. Verse 16 reminds us again of a theme that the author has been addressing previously, the dignity that belongs to people and to the people of God. When he says, for surely it's not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants, the family of faith, Jesus became one of us, not one of the angels. Jesus came to stand with people and to save his people.

[27 : 41] That's not a privilege that belongs to the angels. And we're told here that Jesus became one of us in order to serve us. Two ways in which he does that. Verse 17, for this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. So, here we get a description of the kind priest that Jesus is. He is a merciful high priest who responds to his people's needs.

He is a faithful high priest, faithful to his task, his task of representing his people before God. As high priest, he makes atonement for the sins of his people. I like the way Mike Kruger, in his short commentary book on Hebrews, puts it, he says, I think about a sponge.

What does a sponge do when it's placed in some water? It absorbs it, doesn't it? And Kruger says, Jesus is like a sponge. There at the cross, he soaks up all God's anger at the sins of his people. He soaks up God's judgment due to his people, so that to trust in Jesus means there is no anger left for us. There is no judgment left for us, because Jesus has absorbed it for us. He is our great high priest, and he is the one who is also our great sacrifice. He offers not an animal, but he offers himself. Here's another reason why he's better than the old ways that these people are tempted to go back to. It's not just an animal, he offers himself that perfect, complete, once-for-all, effective sacrifice.

So, Jesus serves us as our high priest, but Jesus also serves by helping us when we are tempted. It's there in verse 18, isn't it? Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. So, again, here is Jesus, and Jesus is fully human, and as being fully human, he also knew temptation. We read the Gospels, and we find Jesus being tempted by the devil towards seeking personal glory, towards gaining wealth and power in kingdoms, and perhaps especially tempted towards glory without suffering, to a crown without the need of the cross.

But the good news is that unlike us, Jesus never gave in to temptation. Jesus never sinned when he faced temptation. And now that Jesus has completed his work, he doesn't stand to the side and say, well, I did it. Now it's time for my brothers and sisters to get on with their own spiritual battles.

[30 : 54] Rather, what does it say? It says he draws near to help his family. He draws near to help his brothers and sisters as we face our temptations. It's a wonderful theme that will sort of reappear in chapter 4 and onwards. But it's a reminder to us of something that we understand instinctively. When someone suffers, and they want someone to talk to, typically they will seek out a fellow sufferer. It's a really helpful book called *Companions in Suffering*. Someone who will be able to understand their situation.

Someone who can offer real comfort and real support. Now here's what the author is saying to us. We can never say of Jesus, or never say to Jesus, Jesus, you would never understand my trouble.

Jesus, you would never understand my temptation. Rather, we're told that he is able to help those who are being tempted because he himself suffered when he was tempted. Remember, Jesus has gone through so much more, and yet without sin. And so he is ready and willing to help us, to help us to persevere, to help us keep faith when we are tempted. So the author to the Hebrews is really saying to us here that the commitment of Jesus to his church is vital for the Christian life.

We cannot do it by ourselves, and we're not asked to do it by ourselves. Rather, that we are invited to look to and to trust in Jesus. Remember, we began with that story of the mum who adopted those orphan girls, and she said, what holds us together is that we committed to love them before they even realized they were ours. And that's a truth that we can apply to God and apply to Jesus. There are times, and maybe this is one of them, when we feel like these Hebrew Christians.

Through following Jesus, it brings trouble. I'm following Jesus, but I'm suffering. I'm following Jesus, but I'm sticking out, and it's hard, and I quite like to give up. I'm not sure I want to be adopted in God's family if it's like this. Well, the author says, here is our hope.

[33 : 31] Our hope rests in God's commitment to love us, his eternal commitment to love us even before we were born. Our hope rests in Jesus' commitment to love, to save, to keep his children. Our hope rests in God's grace that starts that relationship between his people and himself, and in that grace that sustains us from now till eternity. So again, the author is saying to us, we need to look away from ourselves, and we need to look to Jesus. We need to learn and relearn to trust him, and to worship him for his saving commitment towards us. Let's pray, and let's thank God for Jesus.

Lord our God, thank you that in so many ways we are invited to see your commitment to your church, that you are a father who loves your children, that you will never abandon your children, that you sent your son Jesus on that rescue mission, to bring many sons and daughters to glory. We thank you for this wonderful truth that Jesus is not ashamed of his people, even if sometimes we feel ashamed of ourselves. We thank you for that never-ending, never-failing love of God that we come to know in Jesus.

Thank you that he was willing to become one of us, knowing that that would mean him dying as the only way to forgive our sin, to bring us back to God. Thank you that that was a mission that gave him joy.

Lord, when we feel discouraged or we have doubts, when we have fears, when we're sticking out and we're facing opposition, please will you help us look to Jesus. Please will you help us to persevere our faith and faith and knowing that you always stick with us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[36 : 01] Now, as we close, let's sing together the wonderful modern hymn, Christ, our hope in life and death. And let's stand to sing together.

What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone.

What is our only confidence? That our souls to him belong. Who holds our days within his hand?

What comes apart from his command?

And what will keep us to the end? The love of Christ in which we stand.

Oh, sing hallelujah, our hope springs eternal. Oh, sing hallelujah, now and ever we confess.

[37 : 27] Christ our hope in life and death. Christ our hope in life and death.

What truth can come, the troubled soul? God is good. God is good. Where is his grace and goodness known? In our great Redeemer's blood.

God is good. Who holds our faith when fears rise? Who stands above the stormy trial? Who sends the waves that bring us nigh unto the shore, the rock of Christ?

O sing hallelujah Our hope springs eternal O sing hallelujah Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death Unto the grave what shall we sing Christ he lives, Christ he lives And what reward will heaven bring Everlasting life within There we will rise to meet the Lord Then sin and death will be destroyed And we will feast in endless joy

When Christ is ours forevermore O sing hallelujah Our hope springs eternal O sing hallelujah Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death Let's close with a prayer based on those wonderful words at the end of Romans 8 Lord God will you give to each one of us The faith that is convinced That neither death nor life Neither angels nor demons

[40 : 20] Neither the present nor the future Nor any powers Neither height nor depth Nor anything else in all creation Will be able to separate us From the love of God that's in Christ Jesus our Lord Amen Amen Amen Amen Thank you.