

Jesus Christ, Mediator

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[0 : 00] We're looking at Hebrews 2 this morning. Hebrews 2, starting at verse 10. So you can pull out your pew Bible and follow along on the screen.

! In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

We read that again. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

He says, I will declare your name to my brothers in the presence of the congregation. I will sing your praises. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, he says, here I am and the children God has given me.

[1 : 30] Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death he might destroy 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. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers 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. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So I'm wondering if anybody here has seen the movie The Perfect Storm.

[2 : 32] Raise your hand if you've seen The Perfect Storm. Okay, quite a few. It's been around for a while. It's an older movie. It came out, I believe, in the year 2000. And it stars George Clooney.

George Clooney is the captain of a fishing boat. And the fishing, well, it's not been good. It's not gone well. And he's a little desperate. He convinces his crew to go out one last time late in the season.

And so they go. They head out. They go to their normal spot. And they do everything there that they can think of to do to find the fish. Still nothing.

So they take their boat, the Andrea Gale, further out, a long ways from home. They head out to what's called the Flemish Gap off the coast of Newfoundland.

And they find success. They find fish. They find success. And they haul the fish in a big catch, a really good catch. But soon after this good catch, their ice machine on board breaks down.

[3 : 41] And that's a real problem. The only way to preserve their catch is to head straight into shore. No time to waste. They get warnings about how rough the waters are.

They're really rough. They can look around and see the storm brewing. But they're in a hurry.

They're desperate. So they gun it. They just go. And what ends up happening is, well, they find themselves at the point of confluence between some major weather fronts, two powerful weather fronts.

And this great collision of wind and water creates 40-foot-high waves. And even one 100-foot rogue wave that they battle hurricane force wins.

It's quite something. The perfect storm. Now, my intent this morning isn't to be overdramatic about this.

It really isn't. But in a real sense, in a real sense, we are in the midst of a perfect storm. And by we, I mean all of humanity. We are.

[4 : 47] We're in this predicament, this precarious position, like those weather fronts in the movie, bearing down and coming in from different directions. At the same time, there are these forces that threaten today.

These forces, they put us in a precarious position. And our catechism names these for us, kind of summarizing scripture for us.

It names these three forces. Three, it calls them three sworn enemies. The devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

Our own flesh. So let's start with that last one, if we could. Our flesh, the sinful nature.

Because the truth of the matter is, our flesh, there's something about us, a part of us, that's working against us. Paul calls it the sinful nature that's within us.

[5 : 47] And he actually goes on in Romans 7 to describe his own experience of the sinful nature. He says this. He says, so I find this law at work.

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law. But I see another law at work in the members of my body, within me, waging war against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner of the law of sin.

I work within my members. What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death? Always in scripture, it seems that sin and death are close at hand.

There's this connection between the sinful nature and death. The sinful nature kind of eroding this life to the full that Jesus came to bring.

Listen to this from James 1. From James 1, it says, when tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

[6 : 56] Then, after desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it's full grown, it gives birth to death. So that's the first one, the enemy within.

Our flesh, our sinful nature. That's one portion of this perfect storm. The enemy within. There are also external forces, external enemies.

And the catechism mentions the world and the devil. And by world, it's talking about really the whole collection of beliefs and ideas and attitudes and positions and behaviors that stand opposed to God.

In 1 Corinthians, or 2 Corinthians 10, Paul writes this to the Corinthians. He says, I beg you that when I come, I may not have to be as bold as I expect toward some people, like church people, who think that we live by the standards of this world.

Because the truth is, I mean, the world standards are all over the map, right? And usually they don't line up real well with God's standards. Our allegiance lies elsewhere to the law of God and to the way of Jesus.

[8 : 10] The Apostle John talks about this, too. He says, do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. So the way of the world feels really good.

It's easy to fall in love, right? But we've already pledged ourselves to another. Now, I've got to pause and point out just a moment that the word world is used in the Bible in different ways.

And you probably know this, but just let me be clear. The world, on the one hand, the world is a reference to this planet, right?

This world, the work of God's hands, the world that he has made, made good originally, and he's redeeming it and restoring it. John 3.16 talks about the world in that sense, the world that God so loves, right?

He's talking about this place that God made and the people that God made. He so loves his creation, the work of his hands, his world, his image bears, and we should, too, the world in that sense, for sure.

[9 : 18] It's actually the other use of the word world in Scripture that we're really talking about this morning. And it's very different. Again, it's all the beliefs, ideas, attitudes, behaviors that stand opposed to the way of God.

They go against the way God made things originally good. So there's the way of God, and there's the way of the world. There's the kingdom of God, and there's the kingdom of this world. There's seeking God's glory, living for God's glory.

And then there's the world kind of seeking to build up humanity and humanity king and dethrone God. So that's number two, world.

And the third one, of course, is the devil. The devil is that third front in the perfect storm. God dealt him a powerful blow.

When he raised Jesus victorious that first Easter, he dealt the devil a powerful blow. And the Bible says that God's got the devil bound. God's got the devil tied up.

[10:22] But he's still out there. First Peter 5, it says this. It says, be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion.

Looking for someone to devour. So the devil, he tries to undercut people's faith. He'll try and skew people's understanding of God and sense of God and closeness to God.

And skew people's understanding of what the way of Jesus really is. And he's a liar, deceiver. And he's good at it. So that's the three, right?

There's ourselves, our own sinful nature, sort of fighting from within. There's the world around us and the devil, too, the perfect storm.

And it's the situation, really, we've been in ever since our first parents rebelled against God, since humanity stood up to God in the beginning.

[11:26] It's not good. We're sinners living in a sinful world, egged on by Satan. Not a good situation. And there's really, honestly, nothing much we can do about it.

Nothing we can do about it. As creatures, as humans, we can't surgically remove our sinful nature. It'd be nice if we could. We can't surgically remove our sinful nature. We can't erase our guilt before God.

Not at all. We can't eradicate all that's opposed to God in the world. Try as we might. We can't defeat the devil. We're sort of helpless in the face of this storm.

We're responsible for it. And we're helpless to stop it. We can't get out of it. And Romans 3.23 says, The wages of all this, the wages of sin, is death.

That's the bad news. And it's important for us to be very, very clear about the reality. Before we get to the good news, to hear this, the reality that we're in.

[12:29] Before we get to Hebrews 2, and before we get to this wonderful news, the wonder of Hebrews 2, and the wonder of our Savior, we need this reality, this perfect storm that we're in.

And then God's word comes along and tells us what all he did to deliver us. It shows really the great lengths to which our God will go, is willing to go to deliver us from a perfectly hopeless situation, from a perfect storm.

And it's all about Hebrews 2 here. It's all about the identity of Jesus Christ, about who he is, why we can be confident that he's really done it, provided the rescue that we need, all that's needed.

Hebrews shows us how well-suited Jesus was for this mission, for the job as our Savior, as our mediator. It tells us that Jesus, being fully God and fully human, was the perfect fit, the perfect one, the one and only.

What does it mean to be the perfect fit? Well, let's just pause and think about that for just a moment. I've given you a lot of doctrine already this morning, so let's just pause and think about the perfect fit.

[13:45] Let's just think about, say, underwear. Or how about gloves? How about gloves as the perfect fit, right? You want your gloves to fit well.

If you've got mittens on, you know, and they're a little too small, or they're a little too big, it's not that big a deal. But your gloves, you need to fit well. In fact, if something fits just right, including your underwear, you say it fits like a glove, right?

It's a good thing. The fit is important. With hats, too, right? The fit is important. And if you've got a big, tall noggin like mine, you need a little room in that hat in order for it to fit right and feel okay.

We want our hats to fit well. We want our punishments to fit the crime. We want that new teammate on our team to be a good fit with the rest of the team and the teammates.

And, of course, we need our underwear to fit well, right? Fit. Things got to fit well. Fit good. And the author of Hebrews, he knows this, too, right? We've got this perfect storm of our sin and the world and the devil, and it's a perfectly hopeless situation and not just any solution will do.

[14:59] In fact, there's a big question as to whether any solution will do. It's hard to imagine anyone being able to come in and do anything about this perfect storm.

So who would it be? They've got to be the perfect fit. Digging a little deeper, we find that the author of Hebrews here is responding to some people who were saying that God coming in the flesh, in human flesh, was unfitting.

Like some of you thinking a preacher talking on Sunday morning about underwear, you know, maybe kind of unfitting. Well, there were people that were saying that, you know, God coming in the flesh, this gospel of Jesus Christ, that, no, no way, that's unfitting.

God dirtying himself like that, descending so low, becoming a human, burping, pooping baby. No, how unfitting, unthinkable to be made human.

Well, it goes against the very definition of what it is to be divine, right? Jesus couldn't be God. Makes no sense. But Hebrews comes in and comes back and it says that, no, God coming in the flesh, as crazy as it sounds, is fitting.

[16:19] In fact, it's mind-boggling and amazing and really, really wonderful. There was only one way, and Jesus comes as that way, the perfect fit, the only one who could.

He came down. He came into this world, entered this world. He came down into the midst of the perfect storm. And he did it. Only he fit the bill.

And he came, our perfect Savior. Hebrews starts off by talking about how Jesus specifically was superior to the angels.

People were questioning Jesus' status and his authority. And Hebrews comes along and says how he's superior to the angels, exalted on high before the throne of God above.

But he looked just like a human. But he looked just like a human. So this is a stumbling block. He looked just like a human. So how could it be? People wondered. He didn't exactly look the part of someone, a being superior to the angels.

[17:29] Helpless babe in a manger. He got hungry. He got thirsty. He got thirsty. He got nailed to a cross. He sure didn't look the part.

So it was a stumbling block. To a lot of people, it didn't make sense. And that's what Hebrews 2 is responding to. Verse 10.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was indeed, in fact, fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Perfect through suffering. It's not talking here about Jesus being morally perfect, sinless. He was, of course.

But it's talking here about something else. It's saying that Jesus was made perfect as in the perfect fit. He was the perfect fit for what he was being sent to accomplish.

[18:32] And he was made that way in part through suffering. What suffering? The crown of thorns? Yes.

The mockery, the flogging, being nailed to a cross? Yes. But before that, too, the catechism says Christ suffered during, quote, his whole life honor, and not just at the end.

We'll sometimes call this Jesus' humiliation, his humiliation. So there's this whole series of things. He went down, down, down, down, right? He emptied himself.

He left the glories of heaven. He left the throne to become a slave. The creator, the one there, creation, through whom all things were created, he emptied himself to join his preachers, to really be with them, to become human, to take on their flesh, our flesh.

Verse 11 here, it says, Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters. Not ashamed. Joins us fully, embraces us. Jesus is not ashamed to become one of us.

[19:44] Philippians 2 says he made himself nothing, being made in human likeness. And it was a form of suffering that he went through. Theologically, we call it the incarnation.

And then he went on to suffer in all these other ways throughout his life, being tempted by the devil and being rejected by the religious and walked away.

His disciples walked away from him and abandoned him and flogged and mocked. And then, yes, nailed to a cross. Some would say it's all pretty absurd from becoming a creature and then being rejected by those creatures and being killed by them by the hands of your own creatures, that God would submit himself to that.

It's just unthinkable. Hebrews says different. Hebrews comes along and says different. The author here, he knew the heart of God and he just lays it out.

How amazing, how fitting it was, what God did for us and for our salvation. He decided to bring his own son, his own self, through this humiliation, through suffering, to be our perfect savior.

[21 : 04] God well suited himself for the task. Is it foolish? Is it absurd? Or is it simply marvelous? Marvelous that God did this. And how he did this.

Going back to Hebrews 2, it says, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. So that by his death, as truly one of us, he might destroy him on our behalf.

Destroy him who holds the power of death. He had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest, really representing us in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted. He is able to help those like us who are being tempted. He might be tempted. It's hard to overstate the seriousness of the situation that we find ourselves in.

It is, in fact, a perfect storm. And we need to see that. We need to see that danger. And we need to acknowledge our deep guilt and to recognize the reality of evil and the forces of evil and the power of that.

[22 : 22] But we need not be afraid. That's a big part of the message here, too. We need not be afraid. Actually, it's in seeing the storm and knowing the danger that we really come to see and know and marvel at what Jesus done and all he has done and who he is.

He is the perfect fit, the perfect one, the one and only to bring us full salvation. Earlier, I quoted from the Apostle Paul talking about the sinful nature.

And he said, what a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death? What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me? And then he says, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Thanks be to God. Through Jesus. Through this perfect fit mediator. Through Jesus Christ. It's what Jesus did to provide this rescue.

He came to earth, took on our flesh. He died on our behalf. He rose again victorious. He came and rescued us. And then, well, he ascended the throne.

[23 : 30] He ascended. As our brother, he's up there. As our brother, as our savior, he ascended to reign, to be our mediator at the cross.

He mediated forgiveness for our sins. And now in glory, he's standing there, standing in the gap for us each day. He's one of us, shares our humanity. And he's there at the throne of grace in heaven. He's got the ear of the father all on our behalf. This God man. He struggled like we do. So he can really help strugglers like us.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted. He is able to help those who are being tempted. Truly God. Truly human. He's our human brother and our divine priest both at the same time.

And able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. And able to advocate for us before the throne of God above. He's our mediator. God's perfect gift.

[24 : 29] Our perfect savior. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together. Jesus, we celebrate you today.

We're comforted and encouraged to know that you're on the throne. We praise you as fully God and fully human.

You're the calmer of storms. And the one who's with us in the midst of the storms. Open us to your love. To your great salvation. And use us, Lord, to point others to you.

Our perfect savior. Amen.