

Hebrews 2:10-18

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[0 : 0 0] chapter 2. If you're looking in one of the Pew Bibles, it's found on page 1002. We're doing a series in the book of Hebrews this fall. This morning's passage is really the gateway into the next several chapters of Hebrews. It introduces several themes which will be developed in more depth as we continue on. So let me say from the start, I won't be able to cover every important concept in this passage in the depth that it really deserves.

But if you keep coming, we will dig into these things more. And it's like mining in the ground. I have no experience doing that. That was just a random analogy that came to mind. But I'm sure if you dig deeper and deeper, you see more and more of what's there and get more and more of that out of it. That'll be the idea. All right. Hebrews chapter 2, verses 10 through 18. Let's read together.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, behold, I and the children God has given me. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of

God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. On several occasions, people have asked me the following question. If God is really there, why doesn't he make it more obvious? Why doesn't God write a message in the sky for all to see God exists or I'm here? Why doesn't God come and appear to us in person, sort of like Morgan Freeman and Bruce Almighty? It would remove doubt and uncertainty.

It would put an end to inconclusive philosophical arguments. It would establish a common understanding for all people on earth, not just for the followers of one particular religion. Well, of course, Christianity does say that God did come to earth as a man 2,000 years ago, and this man, Jesus, died on a cross so our sins could be forgiven. But you might say, well, how can I base my faith on something that happened so long ago? If God is God, why can't he just wave his hand and say, I know you're not perfect, but it's okay. You're all cool. Why does the Christian faith need to be so complicated and historical and bloody? A man crucified? Why isn't it more obvious?

[3 : 3 7] Now, you know, it's not only skeptics who ask this question. Sometimes Christians ask a very similar question. The book of Hebrews was written to Christians facing suffering who were tempted to give up, and they were asking something like, if God is really there, if Jesus is Lord, why isn't it more obvious? Why can't I feel God's presence? Why don't I see him changing our situation?

I constantly feel pain, exhaustion, maybe even guilt for not being a good enough Christian. Maybe when you look at your neighbors who aren't religious, you think, well, maybe they're not quite as introspective, but at least they seem happy, able to enjoy life most of the time. Is it really worth it to follow Jesus when he seems so far away, when it doesn't seem obvious? Well, whether you're skeptical or whether you're suffering or both, the passage that we're looking at this morning addresses this question. And what it says is that what God has done in sending his son Jesus to live as a human being and suffer and die is not what we would have expected or imagined. In that sense, it's not obvious. And in fact, Christianity is the only religion in the world that makes this claim.

No other religion says that the one God who made the world became a human being and suffered and died, on behalf of his creatures. It's a uniquely Christian belief. But strange and unexpected as it may be, the writer of Hebrews wants us to see that what God has done in Jesus Christ is both fitting and necessary. Verse 10, he says it was fitting that God would make Jesus perfect through suffering.

Now, there's a very interesting word, fitting. He's saying it's not arbitrary. It's not some bizarre, random story. But rather, it's appropriate, given the nature of God. It's the missing piece that makes the rest of the Bible fit together. It's profoundly beautiful in a way that nothing else that we can imagine is. You know, mathematicians talk about elegance. Say that a proof or a theorem is elegant rather than clumsy or deep rather than trivial. It's a similar idea here that he's saying this is fitting what Jesus has done. Now, but he also says in verse 17, he says it's necessary. He says Jesus had to be made like us in every respect. That this is exactly what we desperately need as human beings.

So if you're skeptical, I especially want you to see that the work of Jesus is fitting. And if you're suffering, I especially want you to see that the work of Jesus is necessary. That it's exactly what you and I need as we face the trials of our lives. Now, we've been in the book of Hebrews for a month now. And so far, Hebrews has emphasized Jesus' divine nature. In chapter 1 and the first half of chapter 2, chapter 1 verses 1 through 4, says Jesus is the one through whom the world was created, the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. Verse 5 through 14, he continues, Jesus is greater than the angels because he's God's one and only son who will reign forever, whose ears will have no end. And chapter 2 verse 3, he says Jesus is the Lord God himself.

[7 : 27] But then beginning at chapter 2 verse 9, the writer of Hebrews makes a shift to emphasize Jesus' human nature. Verse 9, if you look back at the page before, he says, we see him. We see Jesus, greater than the angels, who for a little while, who for a little while was made lower than the angels. And then he says, the one through whom the world was brought to life tasted death. So the question follows naturally.

Why would the eternal Son of God become human even to the point of suffering and death? Why would he lower himself in that way? Now the answer is throughout this passage, but especially in verse 10, he says Jesus did this in order to bring many people, many sons and daughters to glory. So first we'll look at why this is fitting in verse 10 through 13, and then we'll look at why this is necessary in verse 14 through 18. So first, why was this fitting what God did? And we can see three reasons. First, it was fitting with God's original intent for human beings. We saw last week in verse 5 through 9 that God made us to rule the world gloriously, to take care of the world under God's authority. The problem was we didn't want to be under God's authority. And so as a result, we don't rule the world very well. Our bodies are constantly afflicted by sickness and suffering and ultimately death. We don't ultimately control our bodies. Nations are troubled by corruption and fear and government shutdowns. We struggle to rule one another well.

And even deep in our own souls, we feel shame and fear. But you see, from the very beginning, God intended for human beings to reflect his glory, to rule and care for the world as his representatives.

He said, be fruitful and multiply and fill the world with life. And God's committed to achieving that original purpose. You might say, well, what did God, how could God do that? That's his purpose, but then we refuse to be under his authority, so we mess everything up. Well, he could have just scrapped the whole thing and started fresh. But he didn't decide to do that. He sent his son to become one of us, to join himself to us in order to restore us to right relationship with God, to bear the image of God as we had always been intended to be. Verse 10 says, Jesus is the founder of our salvation. It's a fascinating word if you look into it. In some contexts, that word simply refers to a leader or ruler. So sometimes it's translated ruler or prince. But it can also refer to the initiator, the initiator of a movement, such as the founder of a kingdom or the originator of an art form, whose example is imitated by all who follow. And in this context, it means both of those.

Jesus is the champion, the founder, the pioneer of our salvation. He blazes a trail where no one had gone before. But he doesn't just blaze a trail and leave us in the dust. He brings us along with him.

[10 : 48] He leads us so that we might share one day in his glory, the glory that God had always designed for human beings to display. So you see, God's plan was fitting with his original intent for human beings.

And second, it was fitting with God's prior revelation in the Old Testament. The author of Hebrews quotes two Old Testament passages in verse 12 and 13. And in verse 12, he quotes from Psalm 22.

Now, Psalm 22 is divided into two halves. And the first half is the cry of a man suffering terribly. It begins by saying, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And it goes on. I am a worm and not a man, scorned and despised. All who see me mock me. My bones are out of joint. My tongue sticks to my jaws.

They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. And yet, despite his suffering, this man in the psalm entrusts himself to God. Jesus himself quoted this psalm when he hung on the cross. Now, as a side note, if you read Psalm 22 today, and if you had no idea where it came from or who wrote it, you might think that it was written by a Christian, reflecting poetically on the meaning of Jesus' death, looking back at it. But actually, it was written 900 years before Jesus existed by King David. Centuries before the practice of crucifixion was invented, which it seems to vividly describe. My hands and feet pierced. I can count all my bones.

[12:40] It's striking how vividly it describes what Jesus endured, even though it was written hundreds of years beforehand. But then it's even more striking if you read the second half of the psalm, because the second half of the psalm is a confident proclamation of victory. And it begins with these words that Hebrews quotes right here. I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you. And he goes on to say, for God has not despised the suffering of the afflicted, but has heard when he cried out to him. And then it ends by saying, this shall be told to the coming generation. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it. Accomplished. Finished. Again, it perfectly describes what Jesus did on the cross, what he achieved in his resurrection. But the point of Hebrews quoting it here is he's saying, Jesus did all that for you and me, for his brothers and sisters, because he claims us. He says,

I will tell of your name to my brothers, my brothers and sisters. That all that Jesus did and all that he went through was for us. Through his faithfulness, even to death, Jesus has made a way for us to enter into the presence of God with him. That's also the point of the two quotations in verse 13.

Those two quotations are from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah. And there's an interesting background. If you look at Isaiah chapter 8, I don't have time to explain it all now. What I'm going to do is I'm going to write a blog post. I don't have a blog, but I'm going to send it out with the church email this week. So if you're on the email list, you'll get my explanation of verse 13 and how he's quoting Isaiah and why it fits. If you're not on the email list, fill out one of those welcome cards and check, put my name on the email list and we'll take care of it. But the first one, the first one of these quotations, Jesus is saying that Jesus trusted God completely. He was faithful even unto death. And then the second one means that Jesus did that for us, to bring us into God's presence with him. Now, Pastor Nick will go into these themes more next week about Jesus' faithfulness. That's the theme of the passage next week. So again, these themes will be developed as we go further. But we see this was fitting. What God did in Jesus, it was fitting with his original purpose for human beings. It was fitting with his prior revelation in the Old

Testament. And finally, it was fitting with God's intent to establish a lasting bond with his people.

You know, suffering together creates a bond between people, unlike almost anything else.

I've never served in the military, but people who have tell me that the experience of being in combat binds you to your fellow soldiers like almost nothing else. You're facing all kinds of dangers and discomforts beyond what you would ever normally experience, but you don't turn tail and run.

[15:51] And you don't give up because you're a unit. You're in it together. You have a mission. You live and maybe even die to accomplish that mission together.

Or if you're a mother, the experience of nurturing a child inside your very own body for nine whole months through sleepless nights, morning sickness, afternoon deliriousness, finally going through labor and giving birth, it establishes a bond between you and that child like nothing else. Or if you want to take an analogy, an engineering analogy, think of the steel girders that hold up the new Q bridge on I-95 that many of you drove across to get here this morning.

Each section is made of multiple steel plates that have been welded together under an extremely hot flame, 3,100 degrees Celsius. That means 5,600 degrees Fahrenheit.

That heat would normally obliterate you right away. Right? Under that intense heat. They're welded together so that they can withstand 50 to 100 years worth of hurricanes, blizzards, blazing hot sun, and 150,000 vehicles driving over you every single day.

And they're not going to break. Because they've been through the most intense fire possible. They've been welded together so that nothing can ever tear them apart.

[17 : 30] When Jesus Christ died on the cross, he faced the most intense fire imaginable. And he did not break.

He joined himself to us. And he has united himself to us. And established an unbreakable bond through his suffering and death.

That's why it says in verse 10, Jesus was made perfect through suffering. It doesn't mean he was morally imperfect and needed purification. It means that Jesus completed his purpose.

To be made perfect. It can mean to be made complete. Or to reach your goal. The whole reason Jesus came to earth. The thing that all four Gospels lead up to and climax in.

Is his suffering, death, and resurrection. You see, it wasn't just being born as a baby that made Jesus our brother. It was in his faithfulness to the point of death that he sealed the deal.

[18 : 35] And now nothing can tear us apart from him. No suffering that we face can compare with the suffering that he endured. Our bond with Jesus is secure.

Whatever runs over us, he will hold on to us. Do you see how fitting it is that Jesus became human? He and suffered and died.

Do you see how much more profound and life-changing that is than spray-painting a message in the sky? Or showing up on the front doorstep just to say, Hey, by the way, I really do exist, just in case you wondered.

Now you might say, but that was 2,000 years ago. It seems so far away. We can never really be sure what happened back then. Why couldn't Jesus come to earth now, in our lifetime?

So I could see him personally, or at least see him on TV. But if that's your question, let me ask you. Do you see how self-centered that request is?

[19 : 41] Part of the very nature of being human is living in a physical body. Which means being restricted in time and space. Restricted to one lifetime.

In one part of world history. If Jesus appeared in every generation, on every continent, he would not have become human. We would have only seen temporary manifestations.

Each one of them incomplete. If he became human, he must have lived only once on this earth. Like all the rest of us.

And experienced, like all the rest of us, that finite limitation. Of only living once in this world. And yet in Jesus' one single life, 2,000 years ago, he forever altered the relationship between human beings and God.

He took on all that was ours. Our finiteness, our suffering, and even our death. So that we might have all that was his.

[20 : 51] His glory. His life. Everlasting. One writer put it this way. He said, when the creator visited his creation to dwell in it, it was not as a star that he came, nor as a lightning bolt, nor as a white whale, or a holy book, or spirit only, but as a man.

And not as many people, not a series of prophets or divine manifestations, but as one individual, the Messiah, the Holy One of God. Could the Lord ever be said to have been truly human if he had not restricted himself to one single lifetime, just as he restricted the rest of us?

Yet in that one unique life, in Jesus, the centerpiece of the human race, the wild tangent of all the frayed and decrepit flesh of this fallen old world, touches perfectly the circle of eternity, and is gathered with amazing mercy into it.

Jesus became, united himself with us, and suffered that we might be brought into his glory. So it's fitting that he did so.

That's the first thing that we see. But it's not only fitting, it's also necessary. It's exactly what we, as human beings, really need. In verse 14 through 18, it shows us three things that Jesus did that we really need.

[22 : 22] First, in verse 14 and 15, it says that he defeated the devil. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy or make powerless the one who has the power of death.

death. That is the devil. Now you might ask, how does the devil have the power of death? There's no other passage in the Bible that describes it quite like that.

But the devil is described elsewhere in the Bible as the accuser. In fact, that's exactly what the Hebrew word Satan means. Accuser. Adversary. He's like a prosecutor in the heavenly court,

constantly bringing charges against people and trying to get them punished.

One picture of this is in Zechariah 3, if you want to see a picture of this. Now his motives, Satan's motives, are not righteous. He's also described as a deceiver and a liar.

He's sort of like a shady drug dealer who entices people with promises of easy money and then a few months later turns them into the police when he has no more use for them.

[23 : 33] You see, the problem is even though his motives are twisted, many, though not all, of the devil's accusations against us are true.

Because we have all broken God's law. We have all participated in the system of evil. When you and I stand before the judgment seat of God, we are guilty of sin.

And the wages of sin is death. So in that sense, the devil has the power of death because he's the accuser. And when we stand before God, we are not righteous.

But it says that Jesus, through his death on the cross, has become our great advocate, our defense lawyer. Verse 17 says, he's a merciful and faithful high priest who made propitiation for our sins.

That word means he made an atoning sacrifice. to cleanse us and take the judgment that we deserved. And so for all who turn to Jesus and take refuge in him, the devil is rendered powerless.

[24 : 43] The accuser is silenced. So let me urge you, if you haven't turned to Jesus in faith, turn to him today. The accuser loves to steal and kill and destroy.

But Jesus loves to redeem and restore and bring abundant, overflowing life. You know, maybe you are keenly aware of your sin.

Maybe you don't need the devil to remind you of it. You know it deep in your own heart. And because of that, you live in shame and in hiding or even with thoughts of despair.

But in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the accuser has been rendered powerless. you may think in your mind over and over all the reasons that God shouldn't love you and shouldn't do good to you and why you don't deserve it.

But that is not the last word. Jesus Christ stands as your advocate before God the Father. And he has never lost a case.

[25 : 47] He's the best defense lawyer in the world. And he's come not just to acquit us, but to bring us fullness of life. And so when our sin is exposed, when we see the reality of our sin, God is not driving us to despair or to run away and hide or to make excuses and try to justify ourselves, but to turn to him.

To turn to the one who bore the penalty for us and to receive again his word. of pardon and his strength to live in righteousness and walk in the light.

So first we see that Jesus has defeated the devil, the accuser. And second, we see that he delivered us from enslaving fear, the fear of death.

Verse 15. Jesus came to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. In the Old Testament, in the book of Exodus, God defeated the Pharaoh in Egypt who hated the people of Israel and wanted to kill them.

And he delivered them from lifelong slavery. And in Jesus Christ, God has defeated Satan and he has delivered us from the enslaving fear of death.

[27 : 13] death. You know, we live in a society that increasingly has no idea what to do with death. For the most part, our response is run away from it.

Avoid it as long as you can. We bury our fear of death under career ambitions or extreme sports or bucket lists or living vicariously through children and grandchildren.

We try to suck as much as we can out of this life because it's all we've got. You only live once. But don't you see? That's just another form of slavery.

We're restless, addicted to the present moment because we can't face the inevitable future. And even in the church, we rarely talk about preparing to die.

In centuries past, it was common to hear whole sermons about how to prepare to die. Now, I've spent my whole life going to church every Sunday, almost every Sunday.

[28 : 24] I don't think I've ever heard a sermon where that was the primary application. Now, I haven't preached one either, so I guess I have some work cut out. The point is, we struggle to deal with death.

And in some sense, rightfully so because death is not pretty. The Bible says that death is an enemy of God's good creation. Jesus didn't simply come to earth to teach us to make our peace with death and simply accept it as part of God's good and natural process.

Jesus came and he tasted death in all its bitterness and fully experienced it and overcame it and conquered it in his resurrection. That's what he came to do to liberate us from its clutches.

Yes, we all will physically die. But in Jesus Christ, we have a brother who has gone through death and come out the other side.

so we need not live in fear of death. We need not run away from it frantically. We need not cringe before it because Jesus has delivered us from its grasp.

[29 : 46] Jesus has defeated the accuser. He's delivered us from enslaving fear of death. Finally, it says he helps us when we're tempted.

Verse 16 says, Surely it's not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Now, sometimes when we think of help, we think of a weaker or more limited person offering assistance to a stronger, more powerful person.

But that's not what this word means at all. It's a strong word. It means to take hold of someone or even to take up their cause.

To be a strong helper. And Jesus has come alongside us and he has taken hold of us and he will not let us go. He has taken up our cause and he will not fail.

You see, that's why we can hear the words that were read earlier in the service from Isaiah 41, which I think the writer of Hebrews is referencing here.

[30 : 53] But you, the offspring of Abraham, my friend, fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Jesus has taken hold of us and so he's able to help us whenever we are tempted, whenever we are tried, whenever we're going through the fire.

Because he's not only won the decisive victory in the past, he is constantly available in the present.

So if you're tempted to become bitter, look to the one who tasted death itself in all its bitterness.

If you're tempted to despair, look to the one who has conquered death and the grave. If you're tempted to envy others who seem more successful, remember all the blessings that you have in Jesus Christ, the high priest, the founder of our salvation.

temptation. You see, Jesus knows what it's like to face temptation. He's faced a hotter fire than any of us will have to go through on our own.

[32 : 17] And you know, we all give in to temptation. And so because we give in to temptation, we don't even know how strong it is. Sort of like a runner who starts out running a marathon and then he gives up after five miles.

He says, boy, I'm exhausted. I'm so out of shape. I could only run. That was awful. You know the people who really know how hard it is to run a marathon?

It's people who started by running five miles and then they've kept on training and training and training and training until they run all 26. Only they know how hard it really is.

You see, we all give in when we face temptation at some point. Jesus never gave in. He ran the race to the end.

He was made perfect. He achieved his goal through his suffering so that we too might be made mature and complete through the sufferings that we face.

[33 : 28] And to know that we're not alone when we face them. So let me conclude with some words from later on in Hebrews where it says, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him so that you may not grow weary or faint hearted. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that as the eternal, glorious Son of God, the King over all that you created, that you did not shy away, that you did not hold back from identifying with us, but that you were made like us in every respect so that you might call us brothers and sisters in your family.

Lord, that we might have a faithful and merciful high priest, a companion in our sufferings, and a perfect advocate before the throne of God.

Lord, we pray that we would look to him. Lord, would you strengthen us to face whatever adversity that we might, that might come, knowing that you are the founder and perfecter of our faith, that you have taken hold of us, that you have welded yourself to us in an unbreakable bond.

We thank you. Amen. This morning we come to the Lord's table where we look back and remember what Jesus did to establish this unbreakable bond.

[35 : 53] As we'll read in a minute, Jesus said, this is the new covenant in my blood. This is the bond that I'm establishing with you through my death.

So we look back to what Jesus has done. We look forward to the day that he'll come again in glory. And in the meantime, he is able to help us in our weakness, in our temptation, in our trial.

So as we share in the bread and cup today, let's look back and praise him. for his achievement on the cross. And let's come and receive his help.

As we take the bread and the cup, we're invited to cling to him. Amen. Amen. Amen.