

The Humanity and Sufferings of Christ

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Hebrews 2:9-18
Preached on: Sunday, October 30, 2016

The lyrics, how true and how life-changing and life-dominating they are.

It is my great joy to take you into the word of the living God once again this morning and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, so will you take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 2. We are going to be looking at verses 9 through 18 in a few minutes.

As I was thinking about what the Spirit of God would have me share with you this morning, I was reminded how over the course of my life I have witnessed a moral freefall in our country, indeed even in the world, and as God allows Satan to prepare the world for the antichrist, we witness just an aggressive, secular, ideological commitment to moral relativism that is antithetical to the timeless truths that God has revealed to us in his word. It's staggering to think that we are able to legally kill unwanted infants; that we exalt the hideous perversions of the LGBT community; that we embrace Islam and socialism in our country, the two most virulently expansionist ideologies of our modern age, ideologies that cannot even exist much less expand in a country where Christianity exists. Then our government wants to disarm us. It goes on and on. It's amazing. But, you know, despite the seismic shift in worldviews dedicated to the destruction of Christianity, I rejoice knowing that the ungodly will ultimately fail and that Christ has promised to build his church. Amen. Moreover, I have an unwavering confidence in the encouraging words of the inspired psalmist who says in Psalm 119:89, "For ever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." Nothing is changing there and so I invite you to join me in turning our attention to this very word this morning in Hebrews 2 as we continue to examine this amazing epistle.

Let me read the text to you beginning in verse 9,

9 But we do see Him [referring to Jesus] who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying, "I will proclaim Your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in Him." And again,

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"Behold, I and the children whom God has given me." 14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Only the mind of an omniscient and holy God could conceive of the plan of salvation that is set forth in his word, and only a perfect and loving Savior could make it possible. I would even add that only a sovereign and omnipotent God could carry it out. And I fear that is very easy for us as believers to grow so familiar with the Gospel that we lose the wonder of it. There is a real danger in that. We can become like the first century believers in Ephesus, remember, they were orthodox in their doctrine, they were faithful in serving the Lord even in the midst of great persecution, even zealous for the name and the reputation of Christ, but their love for Christ had grown cold and the Lord said, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." They had become passionate about Christianity more so than passionate about Christ. They loved their church more than they did the head of the church and, folks, that's a danger that we could all fall into. And because their service to Christ degenerated into a cold, mechanical orthodoxy, God judged that church and removed their lampstand; they literally disappeared. How tragic. Do you realize right now the statistics are that about 4,000 Christian churches disappear every year in the United States. One thousand Southern Baptist churches close their doors every year perhaps for the same reasons.

And remember the remedy in that text in Revelation 2, they were to remember, repent and return. He told them, "Therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first." Remember your initial love for Christ when he dominated your every thought and desire; when you first fell in love with him, the love of your soul; when you couldn't stop thinking about who he was and what he had done for you. Repent of those things that had entered into your life and that have distracted you from really knowing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ and return to the deeds that you did at first. You know, we all know what it is to have that consuming passion for the one that we love, or at least most of us know that. If you don't, hopefully you will some day. You know what it's like to be in love with someone and you can't wait to be in their presence. All you do is you think about them; you learn how to serve them; you reflect upon what a

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blessing they are in your life and you praise God for them. Folks, this is what we must continue to do with our glorious Savior. And by the way, all of that centers around the systematic in-depth preaching, teaching and application of the word of God. That's what we want to do once again this morning as we examine this text that speaks so directly to our hearts regarding the surpassing glory and greatness of our precious Savior.

In these final verses of Hebrews 2, we are reminded that our salvation required three things of our beloved Savior: humiliation, substitution, and suffering, and because he accomplished those things so perfectly, we enjoy identification, liberation and compassion. Hopefully we can hang our thoughts on those six words here this morning. And as we examine this text, we are going to once again see very clearly that God has to be and certainly is sovereign over our salvation. It is obvious, once again even in this text, that though God hates sin, he ordained to allow it to enter into his perfect universe through the voluntary choices of moral creatures, and he did this for a reason, in order to dramatically display his glory through his holiness, through his wrath, his mercy, his grace, his love and his power. And in his infinite wisdom, he foreordained and he predestined a plan by which he could rescue his chosen ones out of the pit of sin and condemnation in which they had fallen. Every single feature of the Gospel, dear friends, down to the most minute detail, reveals the character of God. It's for this reason we can say with Isaiah, "O Lord, thou art my God. I will exalt thee. I will give thanks to thy name for thou hast worked wonders, plans formed long ago with perfect faithfulness."

Dear friends, because God's character is revealed in his plan of salvation, we must be extremely careful to avoid any distortion or subtraction or addition to the word of God. As soon as we inject even the slightest amount of human wisdom, we poison the whole plan, and we bring upon ourselves the apostle's anathema in Revelation 22, beginning in verse 18 where he says, "If anyone adds to these words, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city."

It's fascinating to realize that every detail of the construction and the furnishings of the Old Testament Tabernacle described in Exodus and Leviticus foreshadows Christ. Every sacrifice, every feast, pictured the coming Messiah and God's plan of salvation. So given the incredible precision of God's plan combined with the astounding, the great lengths that he has gone to in revealing his plan to us, centuries before the fact, it is incumbent upon us to exercise that same precision when handling his word and offer the same praise to the God of our salvation.

So with that in mind, let's notice what the writer says here regarding the humanity of Christ and the sufferings of Christ. The first divine requirement of our Savior to secure

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our salvation is found in verses 9 and 10 and I would just use the word "humiliation" to help us grasp what is being said here. Recall, first of all, let's back up in verse 8, it says, "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him." Remember that what he's referring to here is because of man's fallen flesh and because of the power of demonic forces, we are incapable of properly fulfilling God's commission to us to somehow be his administrators, to have dominion over the earth, but because of Christ, because of his redemptive work, all of that is going to be recovered one day. He is the supreme representative of mankind and he alone has fulfilled man's original purpose with respect to dominion and so forth.

Then he goes on now and he says this in verse 9, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." And oh, dear friends, how he suffered, and what humiliation he experienced, what condescension. You know, this continues to be one of the major stumbling blocks to the Jewish people to this very day, that not only God would become man but that he would suffer and that he would die? Not even angels do that. And it's inconceivable to us as well when we try to fathom not only the incarnation of God becoming man, but fathom the reality that he left just the transcendent grandeur of the third heaven and he descended to earth. To think that the one whom angels worship would leave such a place and come down to a place that frankly reeked of the stench of sewage and body odor and disease and death as those places did in those days, and if you go to those places to this day, you smell that very same thing. To come and live on a planet that is corrupted by sin and polluted by death, to set aside his unimaginable glory and take the form of a slave and be made in the likeness of man, and then to humble himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross, it's amazing.

But the question before us and the one that the writer is addressing here is why was such humiliation necessary in God's plan of salvation? Why couldn't he have done it differently? Why couldn't he have just reached down from heaven and just taken up his chosen one, so to speak? Well, the answer is because he is holy and he is merciful and he is full of compassion, and as a holy God, all sin must be punished. It's very important for us to understand. But sinful man could never atone for his own sin so there is a real dilemma here. Galatians 4, beginning in verse 4, we see that "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law," that's referring to the penalty and the curses of the violated law, "that we might receive the adoption as sons." So, you see, Jesus had to take upon himself the nature of a man in order to be punished for our sin, yet he also had to be God in order to endure the sufferings of the elect.

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You see, dear friends, the work of redemption demanded a Theanthropon, a God-man, one who could supernaturally fuse the human nature with the divine to form an indissoluble bond. Jesus according to the prophet was the offspring of David according to the flesh, yet he was God, a ruler whose goings forth are from eternity, Micah 5:2. You see, a man had to die as our substitute but only an omniscient God could intimately know all whom the Father had given him and bear their sins in his body specifically in a real, not a potential but a real atonement. How could Christ be our Mediator unless he could bridge the infinite chasm between God and man? How could Christ be our King lest he be united with us as man? And yet only as God can he reign in our hearts and have dominion over our souls for eternity. So a perfect man had to die and yet only God is holy. Human flesh had to go to the grave, yet only God could overcome it. Moreover, God's holy and infinite justice could not be satisfied apart from a holy and an infinite ransom. So only by his provision could such a remedy be accomplished. So both the human and divine natures had to be supernaturally woven together.

This required, of course, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure had there been another way, an easier way, one that would have prevented God from sending his very own Son to suffer and die, surely the infinite mind of God would have conceived it. But no, God could not deny his own justice so the incarnation and sacrificial death of his Son was the only way. You see, if I could put it this way: nothing but perfect righteousness could satisfy the penalty for violating perfect holiness.

So the first divine requirement of the Savior: to secure our salvation involved humiliation. But as we can see, it also involved, secondly, substitution. Notice there in verse 9, it speaks of Jesus, "because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Let's stop there for a moment. Certainly he is crowned right now with glory and honor, seated at the right hand of the Father. Paul said in Ephesians 1:21, "He has been seated far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." But then he goes on to say now in Hebrews 2:9 why he had to suffer and die and that is, "by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." Now think about this: he didn't come just to die, he came to die for us. As a man, he became our substitute. Folks, do you realize that this was the only way a holy God could show mercy to sinful man? Because what you have here is a very serious theological dilemma, one that could only be resolved on the cross of Calvary. You see, all sin must be punished because God is holy, right? Ezekiel warned, "The soul who sins will die." Paul says that "the wages of sin is death." We see this all through Scripture.

So the issue is this: how can the Lord extend mercy and grace to those who have violated his holiness? How can he do that? He can't just come along and forgive sin and then shower sinners with undeserved blessing because if he did that, he would ignore sin and

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ultimately abdicate his holiness. So there is a real problem here. But, ah, the solution, the resolution is found in Christ. God paid the penalty himself, causing mercy and justice to unite on the cross. And now as John tells us in 1 John 2:1, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." Kids, learn that word. It is a great theological term, propitiation. It means appeasement; it means satisfaction, the satisfaction of divine justice; the only source of divine mercy and grace. He appeased God's wrath.

Beloved, this is why God had to become man. And in a few weeks, Christmas is coming, this is at the heart of the Christmas story. It's all about satisfaction and substitution. People ask you, "Well, what's the real meaning of Christmas?" Tell them: satisfaction and substitution. That will get their attention. And by doing so, you are explaining to them the atonement. You see, Jesus Christ had to be born of a virgin in order for him to be both the Son of man and the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us, the son of the virgin according to the flesh but Immanuel, God with us according to the Spirit. And later in Hebrews 10, we won't take time to unpack that but in verses 5 through 7, we learn that in eternity past the Father prepared a human body for the Son, a body that would never be tainted with sin, no sin nature, one that could therefore become the perfect sacrifice to appease, to propitiate the holy justice of God, and that was the will of the Father. And Jesus came to do that will knowing perfectly well that he was taking upon himself, as Paul said in Philippians 2, "the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of man and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Now, as I said, atonement, that word that you hear from time to time, requires two things: satisfaction and substitution. Atonement, by the way, really means to provide a moral or a legal payment for a fault or for an injury. And it requires satisfaction of the offended holiness of God accomplished only by an acceptable substitution for the guilty party. And this is why as the text says here, he had to taste death for everyone. When I was meditating upon this text this last week, as is often the case, the Spirit of God brings to my mind a host of passages and a lot of lyrics that we sing, and one of them was that great hymn,

"What wondrous love is this,
That caused the Lord of bliss,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul.
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul."

So that's all about substitution. But I want you to notice that the third divine requirement of our Savior to secure our salvation required suffering. Notice verse 10. He says

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something curious here, he says, "For it was fitting for Him." Now, let's stop here for a moment. The term "fitting" means "appropriate." The concept in the original language carries the idea of being consistent with one's character. This was consistent with God's character. It was fitting for God the Father to demand satisfaction of his offended holiness, and apart from justice there would be no holiness. So it was also consistent of his character with respect to his love and his grace and his mercy, and even his power to accomplish our redemption.

So he goes on to say, "it was fitting for Him," and he describes who he's referring to here, "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things," in other words, acknowledging him as the sovereign God of the universe who alone could conceive of such a plan and offer a perfect Savior and secure our redemption when in fact he knew we could offer nothing. He alone is the one that could do that. You know, even as an embryo in a mother's womb, that little embryo contributed nothing to that birth, right? It has nothing to offer. So too man contributes nothing to the new birth. He doesn't do some and then Christ decides that he'll cooperate with him and he'll do the rest. No, Christ has done it all. If I can put it this way, dear friends, darkness can no more contribute to light than the earth can contribute to the brightness of the noon. So "it was fitting for Him," he says, "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory," I love that phrase, "to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."

Now, be careful, there is no moral imperfection implied here. The perfection brought about by suffering that he's referring to here refers to the perfect sacrifice that satisfied the justice of God. Because of his life of perfect righteousness, he became the perfect substitute. Hebrews 5:9 says, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." And to be sure, suffering is the penalty of sin. Boy, don't we all experience that when we sin, sometimes even without realizing it? Talk about reaping what we sow; the misery that we can bring into our lives because of the wicked things that we do.

So suffering is the penalty of sin but a suffering that ultimately leads to death. This is the curse that came upon us as the result of sin. Deuteronomy 27:26, God said, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them." Boy, that's a high bar, a very high bar. Sin demanded punishment which includes suffering and pain and loss. As I think about Christ hanging upon that accursed tree, I think how he lost everything as they mocked him and spat in his face. He lost his dignity. He lost his reputation. He even lost his garments. He lost his life. And with a mixture of human saliva and blood streaming down the swollen face of our Savior, a face that the prophet says could not even be recognized as human, our substitute suffered and he died

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in our stead. He paid in full the payment that sin demands and thus made the perfect expiation for sin; expiation means cleansing, purging for sin.

And oh, how he suffered. I read once what Spurgeon said so poignantly and I think I copied this for you in your bulletin. Here's what he said, "We believe that this agony was commensurate with the agonies of the lost in hell; not the same agony, but an equivalent for it; and remember, not the equivalent for the agony of one, but an equivalent for the hells of all that innumerable host whose sins he bore, condensed into one black draught to be drained in a few hours; the miseries of an eternity without an end, miseries caused by a God infinitely angry because of an awful rebellion, and these miseries multiplied by the millions for whom the man Christ Jesus stood as covenant head. What a draught was that, men and brethren! Well might it stagger even him! And yet he drained that cup, drained it to its utmost dregs not a drop was left. For thee, my soul, no flames of hell; for Christ the Paschal-lamb has been roasted in that fire. For thee, my soul, no torments of the damned, for Christ hath been condemned in thy stead. For thee, my spirit, no desertion of thy God, for He was forsaken of God for thee. 'Tis done, 'tis finished, and by thy sufferings, Jesus, thou hast become perfect as the expiation of thy people's sins."

And I want you to notice because Christ was the perfect Savior and perfect sacrifice through suffering, we read in verse 10 that he is the author of our salvation. The term "author" in the original language could be translated "leader or pioneer; the military hero, the commander who went ahead of his army and blazed a trail to glory." Sometimes it's translated "prince." You see, the Lord Jesus Christ was the supreme author, the perfect example, the leader, the commander. And it's important for us to remember now that this is how God intends to restore to man the glory from which sin has robbed him; to restore man to his original purpose of having dominion. You see, because of Christ's death and his resurrection, we can become like the author of our salvation, the pioneer, our forerunner, and we will share in his dominion. You know, as we look in the New Testament, we saw glimpses of his dominion in his earthly ministry. My, isn't it amazing to read those sections of Scripture where you see how he had power over disease and over death, and even the demons were terrified of him. They recognized that he was the Lord of all creation. Remember how some of them begged him, "Please don't send us into the pit!" You know, today we all live under the bondage of sin and Satan and death but because of the person and work of Christ Jesus, we have been delivered from all that and one day we are going to experience the glorious purpose for which we have been made, and that is to bring glory to God in sharing in the dominion of his glorious creation. It's staggering to think of that.

Folks, this is what God is up to in the church today. This is what he's up to here at Calvary Bible Church and other churches like ours. This is what he's up to in your life.

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This is what he's doing in your life today. Do you realize that all of your trials, all of your suffering for Christ, are designed to conform you ever more into the likeness of Christ so that you can be prepared to share in your dominion destiny as joint heirs with Jesus. It kind of makes everything else in life seem a little bit insignificant, right? That's what he's doing in our lives and this was his purpose before the foundation of the world, and Christ is the pioneer as well as the finished product of all that God has intended.

So because of Christ's humiliation and substitution and suffering, we enjoy at least three things that are mentioned in the rest of this section. First of all, I would just use the word "identification." Notice beginning in verse 11, he says this, "For both He who sanctifies." Let me pause there for a moment. Sanctifies here, it means more than just make holy, it includes giving to us the full range of all of the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus in our salvation. "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren." That is astonishing that God would call me his brother. Let that sink in for a moment.

He goes on in verse 12, "saying," and here, by the way, he quotes three messianic passages that emphasize just that intimate solidarity that Christ has with his people, beginning in Psalm 22:22, "I will proclaim Your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise." By the way, the writer of Hebrews always is using these Old Testament passages, you know, for it to be compelling to these Jews that just couldn't wrap their minds and their heart around Jesus of Nazareth being their Messiah.

Verse 13, "And again," here he quotes Isaiah 12:2, "I will put my trust in Him. And again," quoting Isaiah 8:18, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me." By the way, the context of Isaiah 8 was the coming Assyrian invasion and the need for the people to fear God and to wait for the Lord and many of them were thinking that somehow God was hiding from them but Isaiah was calling them to trust in the Lord and certainly a righteous remnant did, they were awaiting the salvation of God and all of this is applied messianically to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in that text we see that we are not only his brethren, his brother, but we are the children of God. Remember, Jesus spoke of that in John 17 referring to "all whom thou hast given me." He identifies himself with us.

Folks, I just have to pause for a moment as it staggers my mind to think that the Lord left heaven's glory and he took upon himself my humanity to deal with my sin from the inside, it couldn't be dealt with from the outside and thus, reconcile me to a holy God, paying the penalty for my sin and then would be willing to call me his brother. And obviously you can apply that to yourselves as well. We are his brother not because of nature because he is God, but because of our common righteousness, our common faith in

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the Father. Paul said in Colossians 2:10, "in Him we have been made complete." We are now fellow heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17, because we now share his holiness.

So now it is up to us to live in practice who we are in position, right? And because of this identification, that is, who we are in Christ, not who we are in ourselves, he is not ashamed to call us brother. This is so astounding. John MacArthur put it well, "How strange and sad that though God is never ashamed to call us his, we are so often ashamed to call him ours." How often are we honestly able to say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel."

Oh, child of God, think of this: the things that we are examining right now are utter foolishness to the world. They cannot comprehend any of these things nor could we were it not for the Spirit's work in our life, in our heart. The great minds of our age live in a fool's paradise. They are clueless about what is really happening in the world. They are clueless about where history is headed. They do not understand that man's great need is to be reconciled to a holy God. They do not understand that a man had to take upon himself God's judgment on our behalf and to bear it. They do not understand that that man was the Theanthropon, the God-man, Christ Jesus, and yet this is what Jesus has done. He came to enter into our humanity to be, as John Owen put it, a brother so that he could brother us in our adversity.

Well, because of what Christ has done, not only do we enjoy identification with him as brother but, secondly, liberation. Notice verse 14, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same." By the way, the term "partook" means "to take hold of something that is not naturally yours, not naturally ones own kind." And what was that? Well, he took hold or he partook, he took upon himself, you might say, our nature in order that he might die in our place and that we might become partakers of his divine nature, a divine nature we would partake of his divine nature that didn't belong to us. Remember what Peter said in 2 Peter 1:4.

So he says, "since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." Now, I don't think I need to tell you that death is a very unnatural thing. Oh yes, we are used to it, we all die, but that's not the way God intended it. He did not create us to die but he created us to live. It's an unnatural thing and all men apart from faith in Christ fear it unless they have been deceived. And we know that death has been brought upon mankind by Satan who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, the wages of sin is death. And in Romans 5:12 we read, "just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." So in

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other words, in some inscrutable sense, all men save Jesus Christ actually sinned in Adam. This is how God sees it. We all took part in Adam's sin. We all inherited therefore the proclivity, in other words, the negative tendencies or the propensity to sin. We have a sin nature.

And because of Satan's temptation and Adam's sin, all humanity is subject to death and biblically there are really three different manifestations of death. 1. There is what we would call spiritual death or separation from God. Ephesians 2:1 speaks of that, how man apart from Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. Secondly, there is physical death. Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." But then thirdly, there is eternal death called the second death, which is more than a mere separation from God but includes eternal torment in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 describes this horrific scene of the graves giving up the wicked dead and it says, "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

Now, Satan the destroyer's great plan is to see to it that all three of these terrible realities become man's fate: spiritual death, physical death and eternal death. And Satan will do anything to rob God of his glory by keeping souls separated from him, and those without Christ are terrified of death because every man fears in his heart of hearts that at death they may have to stand in the presence of a holy God in judgment, and what a terrifying thing that would be for those who do not know Christ. I'll never forget the first time I heard a person desperately cling to life in the final moments before they died, and I have heard it unfortunately many times since. Shrieking, wailing, flailing around in hopeless desperation. Grabbing hold of everything in sight, knocking things over. Desperately trying to hang onto life. Who knows what they were seeing. I have heard this on several occasions at the Palliative Care Unit at Vanderbilt and at hospice facilities. The nurses simply get out of the way. They have seen it before. Folks, death is the king of all terror to the unsaved but not for those who through Christ have been liberated.

Verse 15, he has "freed those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." You see, theologically Satan knew from the beginning that God was utterly holy and he knew that eternal death would be the consequence of sin, so in his hatred of God, he became the great tempter of man to seduce man to sin and then die because of it and enter into everlasting punishment, a diabolical yet brilliant plan to rob God of his glory, a glory that would come through the worship of those he had made in his image. But of course, none of this caught God by surprise. In fact, as I said earlier, he ordained to allow this whole scheme to unfold so he could dramatically display his glory through his holiness, his wrath, his mercy, his grace, his love and power.

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The Humanity and Sufferings of Christ

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Hebrews 2:9-18
Preached on: Sunday, October 30, 2016

So in his great plan of salvation through Christ, we have been liberated from the terror of death. That was Satan's greatest weapon. Now it is rendered useless. It's an amazing thought. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, Christ says to us, "Because I live, you shall live also." Satan has been robbed of his dominion and his power and as believers, we can actually look forward to death. It's not like we're ready to go out and kill ourselves here, but we know that when it comes, it's just going to be a transformation. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" Paul asks. So we fear no condemnation because we are hidden in Christ and with Paul we can therefore say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Then finally, because of Christ's humiliation, substitution and suffering, we enjoy identification, liberation and compassion. This was also very important for the Jews to understand. Notice in verse 16, "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham." Which, by the way, is a very humbling statement. I mean, the descendants of Abraham are no prize any more than any of us are.

"Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation," there it is again, satisfaction, "for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." You see, folks, because God became man, he experienced all the temptations of Satan and of the world. We know he experienced the same types of things that we did in his life. If you read the Gospel record, you will see how he felt the pangs of hunger and the weakness of thirst. He felt the sting of slander. He knew what it was to even have to exercise faith. He experienced the pain of loneliness and fatigue and obviously rejection. He knew what it was to be grieved in his spirit. And in Gethsemane, the prospect of the cross caused him to sweat great drops of blood. He knew the excruciating unrelenting pain of hanging on a Roman cross, the crucifixion. So folks, for these reasons, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. He is fully qualified to do that. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Dear friends, how could Christ be our faithful high priest that can sympathize with our weaknesses unless he were both God and man? As man, he was able to fully experience and identify with all that we face, all that we feel, but his temptations, I would argue, were much more acute than ours, more intense than anything that we have ever experienced because unlike us, he never yielded to sin. Sin enters into our mind and into our heart and we typically yield to it before we even know it was a temptation. Our flesh

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typically succumbs immediately to temptation. The very thought of sin is simply irresistible to our fallen nature. So we really know nothing of what it means to experience the full force of unrelenting moment by moment, day by day temptation. We know nothing of that. Furthermore, because of his utter holiness, his sensitivity to sin was infinitely greater than ours therefore the level of temptation that was thrown against him was infinitely greater than anything that we could have ever endured.

I mean, have any of you sweat great drops of blood? I haven't. We haven't shed blood on the cross. We've never been forsaken by the Father. Do you realize that's something none of us will ever have happen to us because it happened to Christ in our stead? Isn't it great to know that we do not serve some distant God that is indifferent to our needs; that is somehow far removed from our experiences; that knows nothing of what we are dealing with; is insensitive to our frailties? That's not at all the case. He is now at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf because he knows what we're dealing with. Our compassionate Savior and sympathetic high priest is doing all of this for us and therefore in Hebrews 12:3 the writer says, "For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." Beloved, there is nothing that we could possibly endure that he has not already endured in ways that we cannot fathom.

Again, my mind went to a hymn,

"No one understands like Jesus,
He's a friend beyond compare.
Meet him at the throne of mercy,
He is waiting for you there.

"No one understands like Jesus,
When the days are dark and grim.
No one is so near, so dear as Jesus,
Cast your every care on him."

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Folks, I hope you take comfort in these great truths. I know there is a lot that was thrown at you this morning but I hope you will leave with this, knowing that Jesus understands where you're at in your life right now. Whether it's loneliness, feebleness of body, some heartbreaking severed relationship, maybe it's a wayward child, maybe it's a loved one that has slipped into eternity without Christ, whatever it is, because God became man, he can sympathize with our weakness. But folks, you will never experience the soul satisfying joy of Christ's presence deep within your soul unless you walk hand in hand with him.

Oh, dear friend, what have you done with Jesus? That's my question to you. Do you know him? Do you trust him? Do you love him? And if so, then won't you worship him? Won't you serve him? Won't you commune with him? And won't you proclaim him with all of your heart?

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths that speak so directly to each of our lives. Lord Jesus, thank you for taking upon yourself our flesh that you might be our substitute and satisfy that which we could never satisfy, namely the just holiness of God. We celebrate all of this here today, we give you praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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