

The Suffering Messiah  
Hebrews 2:14-18

Galatians 3:1-16  
Isaiah 49:8-13  
Responsive Psalm 110

Today we are going to pick up where we left off last week at verse 14 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter in Hebrews. I had intended to actually finish out this chapter last week and move into chapter 3 this week but as I was working through the verses it became apparent that just like in the first chapter there was much more that needed to be unpacked there than was apparent at first glance so here we are finishing up chapter 2 today, instead of last week.

So let us start this morning as we did last week, reading chapter 2. I know that we just did that last week, but if you are like me I tend to forget as the week goes by and since what we are looking at this week is a direct continuation of where we left off last week, and last week was a direct continuation of the week before I think it is important to just go ahead and read the entire chapter. One thing that I have always enjoyed listening to other pastor's is developing a larger picture of the bible. Seeing more and more how each piece falls into place, and the more you dig into it the more connected it all becomes just pointing out to God's sovereignty in his purpose and plan of redemption for his people. And that is largely a part of the theme here in chapter 2, with the references back to Psalm and Isaiah, especially the passage in Psalm which had the very words that Jesus spoke from the Cross, and described in great detail as well all those who gathered around mocking him, and casting lots for his clothes. Personally I think that is one thing among many things that is sorely lacking in our congregations today, in fact just in wider Christendom. It is the larger picture, it seems we tend to get caught up into our own little areas of interest. Some focus on the law, some focus on the end times, others focus on works, others on faith, and each year at the appropriate holiday we get attention and mention to events that is believed to have happened around those times, such as Christmas, and easter.

It sort of all becomes cultural, traditional...I mean that in the sense that we tend to do things because they have become a tradition. And in doing so I feel, at least for me much of the purpose and message is lost, we become so ingrained in it, the awe and wonder and excitement is gone. Which is our human nature is it not? As soon as something is no longer new, as soon as something becomes routine, it becomes boring and mindless. Or there is the other side of the same coin, instead of boring and mindless it becomes the focus and purpose. Working in a factory that is always changing like the one I work in, when I oppose any changes that may be proposed the one question that is always asked is, Why do you do it that way. If I was to answer, because it is the way I have always done it, that is not a good enough answer, there must be reason, there must be purpose, and it is the same with the function of worship in the body of the church. Because we have always done it this way, or because it is comfortable is not a good answer. The question we should ask ourselves, is, does this bring glory to God? Is that our answer? We do x,y, or z to bring Glory to God? If we find that we answer for any other reason then I think we have a problem.

Yes, all of his is relevant to this passage here today, no I am not going to pose any new plans or drastic changes for how we do things because I think that we can honestly say that we do what we do for the Glory of God alone, as much as we humanly can. I bring this all up, because as I mentioned I think this is a large struggle in the church, being tied to tradition, or completely blowing tradition out of the water and floating out way in no mans land. As I often say when talking about pretty much everything in life, it seems that the truth, and the answer often lies in the middle. We must not be tied down so hard to our ideas of what we are comfortable with, things that have becomes our traditions that we hold them to high esteem, but we also must be careful not to just abandon good order because then we would end up like these Hebrews here, and the Galatians and others who have allowed weird doctrines and believes to creep in. That is why such things as the superiority of Christ is paramount in our faith, that is why such doctrines as the incarnation of Christ, and the propitiation for Sin, the adoption, and his righteousness imputed to us sinners should be central in the heart and mind of ever single believer. These core doctrines and beliefs not only set a foundation for which to stand in the face of trials and persecution, or even in the least any who would seek to lead us astray to new and various doctines and beliefs. But it also acts as a compass in our christian walk. Our compass as Christians should always be pointing to Christ, we should not be turned to the left or the right, but we should remain focused on the one who as the Author here put, is the captain, or pioneer of our faith.

With our hearts and minds always pointing to Christ, what do you think that will do to your Christian walk? How do you think that will effect your personal relationships not only within the church, but outside it as well, with your family, your neighbors, your co-workers. If we can grasp the big picture of the gospel, if we can start to weave together the golden threads from the old testament, and the new testament together it will only help to serve us to grow in understanding and faith, it will only lead us to be even more Christ like in our journey through this life. That is one thing that I am beginning to notice more and more as I become older, at even at 40 now I have a long way to go, but my mindset has changed, I recognize I don't think in the same way I did when I was 20, I don't think in the same way that I did when I was 30. As this life speeds on, as I have seen more, experienced more, my view of the world around me has gotten larger, I tend to pay more attention to things I never noticed, or didn't care to notice before. It is the same with the Christian walk, the more you study, the more you pray, even the more you fellowship and share with your Christian brothers and sisters the larger your picture becomes, the more grounded in your belief and solid your stance upon the gospel becomes. So when someone comes to you with some idea about implementing old covenant laws, or in the case here in this book, the idea of worshiping angels, and I am sure there are 1000's of other things that we can add to this list...if we are grounded in this faith, grounded in the word, having our compass always pointing to Christ, and ask the question...how does this glorify Christ? Then I think that we will go a long way in both protecting ourselves and our fellow brothers and sisters from falling into false beliefs, but also we will be more encouraged, we more patience, more tolerance, and love toward each other.

We are all fallen people who have been redeemed by God, there is nothing in us worthy of such other then what God has given or enabled in us. And we, as fallen humans, tend to hurt each other whether intended maybe sometimes, or unintended does not negate that fact that it does happen. But in this we must not lose sight of who we are, Children of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, who died to cover the horrible part in us that bubbles up sometimes. Why do you think there are so many Christians who still struggle with anger, or depression, well I think it is because we fall into moments where our compass is not pointing to Christ, we forget, we take a little journey off the side path and allow ourselves to indulge in our anger, our pride, our lust. Sometimes we lose sight of the big picture of who God is.

We lose sight of his sovereignty over all things and we complain, we become disappointed that something didn't go how we thought it should go, we get depressed by all the things that we maybe struggling with in this life. We forget the grace and love that was shown us, we lose hope, we lose trust, we no longer are looking to God, but wallowing in our own self pity because we feel we are suffering to much, or for to long. But God has not promised us a life of no suffering, in fact the bible says that we will suffer, and what usually happens when the suffering becomes greater then we can bare? Well, we finally turn to God don't we, Just as Paul said, "when I am weak, he is strong." Do you see how all of this is tied together? Are you starting to get this big picture of Christ? This is why all of this is so important because it is not just some esoteric belief system, it is a vibrant, living, breathing faith that effects us each and every day. The doctrines of Grace, the belief system of God's work of salvation in his children is not just something for scholars with to much time on their hands to argue about, it is our hope, it is our strength, our salvation, our life is in the hands of an almighty sovereign God. Your salvation didn't happen to by chance, or because you just happened to be at the right place at the right time, it was God working not only in your life, but in the life of those who brought the gospel message to you. The implication of this is that if God chose you, if he truly orchestrated all the events, exposing you to the gospel and enabling you to hear and to understand, then what are you worried for? Why are you depressed? Why are you angry? Look what Christ as done, for you! Rejoice! Rest in him.

And that brings us to today, finishing up chapter 2, another doctrine that has large implications into the life of the believer, and that is the purpose and reason for the incarnation of Christ. So, as I said let us start this morning by reading chapter 2 in it's entirety. So, as we talked about last week the necessity of the incarnation, verses 10-14. Christ was made the perfect sacrifice for our sins, because he himself overcame them, he took on flesh, just as we are, felt hunger, he dealt with tiredness, he dealt with being weary, just think back of our study through the book of Mark, often times he became weary and frustrated with his disciples did he not? Christ was fully human, with all of that which comes along with it, but as the author here says, it all was so that he could be the pioneer, the captain of our faith which is made perfect through his suffering. The righteous requirement of God to reconcile his fallen and rebellious creation took an act of God, for it is only God himself who can fulfill what he requires for it is only He who is perfectly holy, just, and righteous. Yet, man's sin and rebellion can not just be forgotten, he can not merely pretend that we are sinless, a price must be paid to raise the curse that it set upon man, and the only worthy price is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, the one who is fully God, and fully man, having both the issues that being in the flesh has, but also having the holiness, and righteousness that only God can have.

Can you see why the incarnation is so important? Why Christ must be both fully God, and fully man? For if he was not fully God, he would not be holy, and righteous, he would have been fallen, corrupted and sinful just as we are. And if he did not become fully man, neither would he be a worthy sacrifice to reconcile mankind to God. So verse 14 here this morning starts out on other other side of this coin. Christ, being the Son of God, became flesh...so that we, men of flesh, can become Son's or children of God. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of the flesh and blood," We, as the adopted children have partaken of the flesh and blood of Christ, that is the purpose of communion is it not? To remind us of this fact, that we bound with Christ through his suffering on the cross, by his flesh being broken and his blood being split for us we have become the sanctified children of God. Just as Christ became flesh, through Christ we have become spiritual children. Continuing on here in verse 14 explains this very thing, this very mystery. "He himself likewise shared in the same, ( he became like us, lived like us, suffered ) that through death, he might destroy him who had the power over death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Without the incarnation of Christ, he would not be able to die, he would not be able to be a worthy sacrifice for our sin. At the cross was the great encounter with Satan, who had the power of death. Christ's death rendered Satan powerless, for his death was not the end, it was not the destruction of his kingdom, it was not a win for Satan, it was his destruction. It was the establishment of God's kingdom, it was the coronation of Christ as King over all creation. Even Satan's power of death is subject to God's sovereignty. That should be a great encouragement to all of us shouldn't it? While death may rule and reign here on the mortal coil of this world, it only effects the flesh, the body, it does not rule and reign in the spiritual realm, for in the life after this, there is no longer death, there is either everlasting glory with our savior, or everlasting suffering and damnation with Satan. It is both a glorious, and a sobering thought that we are just one breath from meeting the God who created us, and we will either stand before him as adopted children through the blood of Christ, or rebellious sinners sent into eternal punishment.

Through Christ's defeat of Satan at the cross, through his resurrection he has become the pioneer of all of us who are to follow. As Calvin wrote, "Our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed, made himself our redeemer in the person of his only begotten Son. This is our acquittal, the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God. We must, above all, remember this substitution lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life." Are you a child of God? Then what are you worried about? The Very God who adopted you, you sent his Son to Die for you will he not take care of you? Are you anxious, or depressed? Why be? Has not God already defeated our greatest enemy, death? If God has defeated death, and has shown that even Satan himself is subject to his sovereign will and design then do you not believe that God will also provide and take care of you? Are you angry? Why be? We should rejoice for that which frustrates or angers us matters little in the grand scheme of God's plan, all worries, problems, frustrations of this world pass away with the flesh. As verse 15 says, "we have been released from the fear and bondage of death"

Returning again to his original point, the author here once again reiterates our hope in Christ, "For indeed he did not give aid to angels, but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham." Notice, he does not say that he gives aid to the seeds plural, or to Abraham, but to the seed of Abraham. Who is the singular seed of Abraham? Well, that is why we read Galatians 3 this morning. Verse 15: "Brethren, I speak in the manner of men; Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made, He does not say, and to seeds, as of many but as of one, and to your seed who is Christ." Again, the big picture, Abraham's seed, is the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ who has come, in whom is all of the promises given to Abraham of an inheritance and a nation which numbers greater than the stars, or the sands of the ocean. Christ did not become an angel to redeem the angels, but he became man to redeem man.

Verse 17 "Therefore in all things he had to be made like his brethren, ( he had to be made like us, to redeem us ) that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. The Son could not have become the representation of mankind before God, offering himself as the high priest of our faith, giving himself as a sacrifice so that we maybe reconciled to God. He would not have been a worthy sacrifice without the incarnation. Simply put, representation must include identification, Just as we on our own merit are unable to be as be identified as righteous before God, without Christ first becoming our representative and taking upon himself the penalty of our sin, Christ could also not be a true representative for us, or a worthy sacrifice for us, without fully being identified as one of us either.

Finishing up chapter 3 today, last verse, says “ For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted.” Christ suffering and temptation is a significant proof in the genuineness of his incarnation, he had truly become like, taking on flesh able to be tempted, and suffer as we do. Because of this, he has become our hope, our guide, through out temptations and sufferings. Much in the same way people have had experienced the same loss, or same trials can have a special bond, we too have a special bond with Christ who indeed suffered greater then we ever shall. He also is our aid through not only suffering, but temptations for he had overcome the temptations of the devil, unlike us he did not fall into sin but instead defeated it making him the spotless lamb who would die for our sins. Having no sins himself, taking our sins upon himself and paying the penalty in our place.

So to summarize, he became like us so that he may suffer and be tempted as we are, but not succumbing to either remained faithful and steadfast even to death, so that he would become our high priest, the pioneer, the first fruits, of our faith. just as he became like us, and because he became like us, we may therefore become like him. Through him, and only through him alone can we be found holy and righteous before God. Only through his representation of us before God can we be identified as Children of God. I hope that this passage today servers as an encouragement to you as we each go through temptations, trials, and sufferings. To know that ultimately Christ has defeated all of these things on the cross, for us so that we one day maybe delivered from the suffering of this world and be transformed and be in the very presence of our loving and gracious Father.