Christ Saves His People

Hebrews 2:14-15

May 17, 2026

Well, good evening. Tonight will be part one of, it's a single sermon needs to go together, but I don't have that kind of time tonight. So you get the first part today, second part next week. Turn to Hebrews chapter 2, end of the chapter, Hebrews 2:14 through 18.

I have in my past had people come up to me, students come up to me, younger Christians come up to me and ask why it is that the son could not have come down from heaven as a full-grown man and accomplish our salvation, say in a month's time, or even just the passion week. Why not just come down, passion week, die on the cross, rise from the dead, return to heaven.

Why is it that that is not an acceptable way of thinking about the atoning work of Christ? The passage before us helps to explain why that is not an accurate way of thinking about the son. Helps us to understand why he needed to live a full human

life, to be like us in every way. The author of Hebrews has said in Hebrews 2:10, he says that the author of our salvation, or as we were speaking about last time, the pioneer of our salvation, the one who went first, he had to be perfected through sufferings.

He had to be perfected as the author, as the pioneer of our salvation. And as we are about to learn, there is more to salvation than mere forgiveness. And I don't want you to misunderstand me.

I'm not downplaying the need for forgiveness. The forgiveness of our sins is vital. Not minimizing the significance of that at all, but the forgiveness of sins is really the beginning of our salvation and not the end of it.

It's not the fullness of our salvation, it's the start. For the fullness of our salvation, Christ had to live the full human experience. Let's go back to Hebrews 2:10, and we'll just read the back half of this second chapter.

"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. For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are

all of one. For which reason he's not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will recount your name to my brothers in the midst of the assembly, I will sing your praise.'

"And again, 'I will put my trust in Him. And again, behold, I and the children whom God has given me.' 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, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

"For assuredly, He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like his brothers 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. For since He himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, He is able to come to help those who are tempted."

I hope you can hear it there, but it's as I said, the gospel is not simply about forgiven sins. That is what I've heard some people say, because Jesus died on the cross for my sins, I get to go to heaven when I die. That is a very simplistic, shallow understanding.

I think sometimes people who express that, true Christians who express that, they may be at the beginning of their understanding of Christianity. They may be at the beginning of what it means to be a Christian, and that may be as expansive as they can speak at the time, but there's obviously more learning that needs to take place. The gospel is about eternal life, not just an eternal longevity of life, but an eternal quality of life.

And it's the outworking of a relationship with God in and through Christ forever. According to Hebrews 2:12 and 13, that is what Jesus himself was anticipating throughout his earthly ministry, and what he was looking forward to, what brought him through suffering. He looked through the cross to the glory.

He looked beyond the depth of the grave to the heights of heaven's glory and the goodness of the father's glory and love. And as John 17 says, He looked forward to that time when there was be a revealing and a manifestation, a fullness of the inter-trinitarian love between father and son that then is shared and spread among all of his people.

As we see here in Hebrews 2, as Jesus thought as a human being, as a man with a nature like ours, he looked through his afflictions and his suffering, and he looked beyond them and

beyond even the cross itself to see with eyes of faith, to a future conversation with us, to a time of rich fellowship with his brothers.

He sought that, a time to sing hymns of praises to God, his father and our father. He looked forward to a time when he would be with us, his brothers, he being our brother to be with us forever. And this is why he had to share in our humanity, the fullness of our humanity, a real full experience of humanity all the way from conception to birth, through young childhood and growth into adulthood.

He had to be tested and tempted in all points as we are, and yet without any sinning. That's what we get to see this evening, how Jesus not only shared in our humanity, but how he shared in the consequences of our fallen humanity to save us fully as our perfect atoning sacrifice, and to serve us eternally as our great high priest, as our brother and as our closest friend. So we've got two points that I just mentioned, we'll cover the first point this evening, and then the second one next Sunday.

The first point is, number one, Jesus shared in death to save us fully. Jesus shared in death to save us fully. You see

there in verse 14, therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same.

This is again a restatement of the doctrine of the incarnation that our redeemer partook of our humanity. He shared in our flesh and blood. The Greek text actually has those reversed.

The idiom in their day was blood and flesh. Ours, flesh and blood. That's why it's translated this way or rendered this way in the translation, but it's really the doctrine of the incarnation.

And speaking of flesh and blood, flesh and blood reality, and note in verse 14, as he continues, the dual purpose there. Number one, "That through death, He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil."

And then number two purpose, "That He might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." Now in verses 14 and 15, what I just covered there, do you see the forgiveness of sins? Is that manifest to you? It's there, but it's not overtly there, not yet. It comes to the propitiation issue later.

But the pastor at this point wants us to see that Jesus took on flesh to deal with the consequence of our sins, which is death. He speaks of death three times there. He speaks of through death. He speaks of the power of death, and he speaks about the fear of death. And the one who wields the power of death, who has enslaved us through the fear of death, is our ancient and mortal enemy, God's most ancient foe, the devil, Satan, the father of lies. Jesus said of him in John 8:44, that "He's a murderer from the beginning."

He is the great, most successful mass murderer that ever was, because he has murdered us all. He's brought the whole human race, through Adam, into the position of sin and fallenness and killed us, really, led us into death. Jesus said in Luke 11:20 to 22, this is also paralleled in Mark 12:29, but Jesus said that in Luke 11:20, he said, that he comes to drive out demons.

Remember, he cast out demons throughout his ministry. Demons shrieked when he came around and he cast them out with just a word. But when he casts them out, he speaks of that as casting them out by the finger of God.

Like that's a small thing. It's a small exercise of power, as if there's any measure on God's power. He doesn't expend

energy at all when he exercises power, but he drives out demons by the finger of God that proves to his disciples that the kingdom of God has come.

The power that he wheels over the devil is the authority over death itself. He says this going on in that same section, Luke 11:21 and 22 he says, when a strong man fully armed guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. Who's that strong man? That's picturing Satan.

It's picturing the devil. It's picturing Beelzebul. That's who he's being charged is in Beelzebul's name of casting out demons. You can only cast out demons because you're doing it in Beelzebul's name. He says, that's ridiculous. He says, when a strong man fully armed guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.

But then this in verse 22, but when someone stronger comes, then he attacks him and overpowers him. And he takes away from him all his armor and all that he had relied on and distributes his plunder. That stronger someone is Jesus.

The strength comes by the finger of God, but his manhood comes by virtue of the incarnation. The qualification that he has to stand for us in our stead against the devil, to even be

qualified to take the field against the devil is because he stands as a representative man for us. He has a public office.

He has a public role. The qualification to stand for us against the devil came because he shares fully in our humanity. The pastor writing Hebrews says in verse 9, that Jesus came to rectify our fallen condition.

"For a little while, he was made lower than the angels" to restore God's original intention, which is, he quotes there from Psalm 8, that we would all be crowned with glory and honor and that all creation would be subject to mankind who is created in the image of God.

So to rectify our fallen condition, it had to start with his death. It had to go to the most fundamental level of concern, the most fundamental grip that the enemy had on us; kind of the ace up his sleeve all the time, was the fact that he could pull the death card at any time.

So in a completely unexpected turn of tables, it was by his dying that he conquered death, because he rose from the dead. He took from the devil, what the devil had believed to be his chief weapon, which was the threat of death. He held that specter of the fear of death over humanity at all times.

That's still the case today. Many people that you talk to, they don't wanna talk about death. They don't wanna even let it come into the conversation, because why talk about something negative? Why talk about something they don't wanna think about, the fact that they have no control over that.

Taxes, we find that the rich can avoid, death, not so much. And so they're spending all their money to build AI systems that they think will preserve their life on into the future. They hope for a mind meld somehow with artificial intelligence to allow them to live forever, thinking that they can escape death.

I can tell you no amount of money, no amount of time, no amount of artificial intelligence that comes from the mind of man is gonna spare man from death, but there is one who did snatch the power of death from the devil himself.

It reminds me of, remember in reading, in your Old Testament reading, when it speaks of David's mighty men, there's one guy named Benaiah. I love this guy. He's one of David's mighty men.

And he killed this very impressive Egyptian warrior who was a man of renown. It says in 2 Samuel 23:21, "he went down and

snatched his spear," that guy's spear, "out of his own hand and killed him with his own spear." That's a tough dude.

I love stories like that. That's what Jesus has done with death. Snatching death right out of the devil's hand; conquering death itself by dying. That's a completely unexpected turn of events. He died and then he rose from the dead showing power over death.

One day he's gonna come judge the devil and his angels. He'll cast them all into an eternal death in the lake of fire where they will suffer eternally. After the final judgment, death is going to cast away the tool of divine judgment.

Death, he'll cast that away forever. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 15:26, "The last enemy that will be abolished is death." He waits until then, because death is the great equalizer over man and angels.

Death, that permanent separation from God and his goodness and his favor, that's what death is. Death in the Bible is separation. There's physical death, which is separation for us, separation of the spirit from body, that's physical death. And then there's spiritual death; to be basically, we're the walking dead before Christ. We have no life in us.

But then there's eternal death to be forever separated from God and his goodness, that's what will happen with every soul, every, whether angelic or human, every spirit will suffer in eternal torment away from God forever, which is eternal death.

In Hebrews 2:14 to 15, notice the verbs that are there. "He came to render powerless the devil," it says first, and then "He came to free from fear those who were enslaved all their lives." The cage in which slaves lived isn't a physical cage with bars and iron and steel and chains. It's something that's actually more potent than that.

It's a cage and a prison that follows you around wherever you go. And it is that specter of death hanging over your head at all times. It's an amazing, amazing imagery here. He came to render powerless the devil. He came to free from fear those who were enslaved all their lives. He lets them out of the cage.

This is presented here as the dual purpose of the incarnation. Now we know that the devil is still around, right? "He prowls about," Peter says, "like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." But for the Christian, he is now really the toothless lion, the clawless little feline, powerless devil.

How so? How is that? That term, render powerless, is the verb *katargeo*. It's a word that means, caused to be useless. In some translations, it can be destroy and it can very appropriately be used to speak of destruction.

But here it's to render useless, to make ineffective, to basically take the engine out and make the vehicle inoperative. That's the idea here. Jesus has defeated death that has taken away the devil's effectiveness.

The hold that he has historically had over sinners has been broken, gone. How so? I wanna show you this by analogy. So if you're in your Bibles, turn over to Romans chapter 6. Let me show you a kind of analogy, because it uses the same verb.

Romans chapter 6, starting in verse 1, Paul uses the same verb *katargeo*, but it's in a different context. And I just wanna show you this because it really illustrates what the pastor of the Hebrews is getting at.

And actually will encourage you, hopefully in your sanctification, as it's encouraged me many, many times. Romans 6:1 to 4 says, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of

us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

It's by walking in newness of life that we demonstrate our own death to the power of sin and death. It's by walking in newness of life that we demonstrate we're no longer caged, but we're set free. The devil no longer has a hold on us.

So we can see how this happens, if we keep reading. Look at verse 5, Romans 6, "For if we become united with him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin: for he who has died has been justified from sin." Or it could read acquitted from sin. Sin no longer has a hold over you is the idea.

That's the verb in verse 6, used again from Hebrews 2, same verb used here in verse 6, *katargeo*. Here it's used to show that this thing called the body of sin, what's that? Another way to put that is the law of sin in our members or the sin principle that kind of sets the lifestyle of the sinner. Basically it's

sin power. It's the power of sin. Sin's power over us, *katargeo*. It's been broken.

It's been rendered ineffective. It's influence over us is attenuated, weakened. It's made ineffective by union with Jesus Christ. Again, how does that happen? Take a look at the next section. Starting in verse 8, "Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

"Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and don't go on presenting your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you're not under law, but under grace."

Because of our union with Christ by the Holy Spirit, the resurrected life of Christ, the power of that life is now at work in us and it's at work in us powerfully. You say, I don't

feel that power. And I would say to you, I would answer that retort with, you haven't been practicing that power.

You have not been exercising what you actually have as a resource. You haven't reached into the treasure room and pulled out this really cool sword or weapon to deal with your sin. It's there. You just don't know how to use it. Paul sets up the groundwork right here to show us that we can now do what we never could do. We can count ourselves dead to sin.

We can count ourselves alive to God in Christ. We have power not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies any longer. In fact, we must not. Put another way, we can now say no to sin. There's no need to obey its solicitations. There's no need to give in to its temptations.

There's no need to follow its suggestions or succumb to its enticements. In fact, not only is there no need, we must not do that. Instead, verse 13, we can go on "presenting ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead."

In the parts of our body, we can offer to him as instruments of righteousness to serve him and to please him. We really can do that. In Christ, we have that power. United to

Christ, we really do have that strength. You just need to test it out. You just need to exercise it by faith.

Now, let's go back to Hebrews chapter 2. I'm just trying to show you an analogy that sin no longer has mastery. It's been rendered inoperative, ineffective. Positionally, that's the case, but practically, that's the working out. That's the working out of your salvation. You no longer have to sin.

You no longer have to give in to lusts. You no longer have to follow angry impulses. You no longer have to succumb to fear and worry and anxiety. You no longer have to do that. In fact, you're charged not to in Christ. So we come back to Hebrews 2:14 to 15, and just note some parallels.

Now that Jesus has freed us from the devil, we can say no to fear and to anxiety and to worry about the future. There's nothing but good for us in the future. There's nothing but blessing in our future.

If you've read to the end of the book, you realize that everything in Christ for us is yes and amen. Even the difficult things we go through, even the trials that we go through are all goodness, are all privilege to strengthen us and to grow us. Ask anybody who's been through some very difficult training program

or very difficult master's program or PhD, and you say, man, you paid money for all that suffering? And they say, yes, I did.

Well, was it hard? Oh, it was miserably hard. Well, why didn't you bow out and just go get a burger? And they'll tell you, I paid this money and I endured the pain because of what it did in me and for me and through me and allowed me to get this job and make this amount of money and bless this many people. It's all worth it. I'd go and do it again if I could.

That's exactly what trials are for us as Christians. They are opportunities now to grow and that's why I can say without any fear of contradiction that everything that God prepares for us as Christians for our future, it's all goodness, it's all blessing, it's all kindness.

Yes, trial, but trial means he loves you. He's perfecting you. He's strengthening you. There's no longer any slavery for those who are in Christ, because if the son has set you free, you're fully free. You're free indeed. What proof is there that Christ has rendered the devil powerless? How do we know if we've been set free? You can just look inside your own heart.

Think about it this way. I'll ask you, do you believe the gospel of divine accomplishment? Do you believe that for

yourself? Do you see that Jesus is him who did it all for you? That's something. "The demons believe and they shudder."

They don't believe that for themselves. Do you know that the father has forgiven you because of what Christ has done and not for anything that you've done? That's something too. You don't take credit for believing these truths and affirming them and holding them dearly to your heart.

You don't take credit for that. God did that in you. Do you have freedom from fear and anxiety over death itself? Do you have power over sin? Even a little power to resist temptation? Maybe to say no at its first or second solicitation, even if you do fail in the third one.

But did you resist at all? Do you want to resist? If you did fall, do you look back and say, what was I thinking? God, forgive me. Strengthen me for next time. It's evidence that you've been set free. It's evidence that the devil's power over you has been weakened and really rendered ineffective.

And any sinning you've done has just basically, speak a lie and said the devil does have power. Sin does have power and mastery over you. It's not true. Whenever a Christian sins, we're living a lie. Whenever a non-Christian sins, it's the true

nature. It's living the truth. Whenever a Christian sins, it's living a lie. This is why God chose to leave these beleaguered, bewildered, perplexed Hebrew Christians in Rome.

He wanted them to stay there in that local church because he intended to put them to the test, to put them through a trial of fear about what may happen in the future, not knowing what's going to happen with the politics and with Nero and his soldiers could come barging in at any time and drag them off to the Colosseum, slam them shut into a prison. So they're going through this trial.

God left them there. Is it because God's unkind? Is it because God's breaking his promises? No. God does the same thing with us. He tests us. He loves us so dearly. He wants us to be the strongest children ever. So for the time being, while being sanctified, verse 11, while we are being perfected, prepared for glory, verse 10, while we are learning to walk as he walked, we too must be subjected to trials, temptations to fear and anxiety and sin.

So if you see in yourself some power over fear and over sin, if you have some sense of freedom, knowing you're not a slave of sin or of the devil, no longer subject to his fear campaign, if there's any success, listen, beloved, keep leaning

into the test, embrace the trial, seek the help of someone who has gone before, someone who is ahead of you on the journey and on the path who knows how to fight and who knows how to win, get their help because they will be ready and willing to help you, to give you counsel, advice.

Now, we're gonna draw our time to a close here at this point, but I do wanna introduce the next point so you can see where our help comes from. Second point, and you can write this down, but this will be next week, we'll cover this fully, but just to introduce it for now.

Number two, Jesus shared in suffering to serve us eternally. Jesus shared in suffering to serve us eternally. So Christ saves his brothers and now Christ serves his brothers. It starts out there in verse 16, "for assuredly he does not give help to angels, but he gives help to the seed of Abraham." Pause there for a second. For the sake of clarity, probably a better translation of that verb, *epilambanomai*, it's not to help, which is what I've just read to you out of the LSB translation. Other modern versions render it that way as well, but rather this verb here means, to take hold of. And it's referring once again to the incarnation.

So parallel to Hebrews 2:14, he's basically recapitulating, reaffirming the incarnation, bringing it into this second point that he's making. So going back and reading verse 16, For assuredly he does not take hold of the nature of angels, is how we could put that, but he takes hold of the nature of the seed of Abraham. Very interesting that he doesn't say he takes hold of the nature of Adam or mankind.

He specifies he takes hold of the nature of the seed of Abraham. We'll talk about why that is next time. "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in all things." And then comes another dual purpose. Number one, "So that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." And number two, "that he might make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Their sins, shows up here. And this is the high priestly function. "Since he himself was tempted in what he suffered, he's able to come to the help of those who are tempted." So as I said, beloved, don't be afraid of temptation and testing. Don't fear the supposed power of the devil. Don't be concerned even about the weakness of your own flesh and about your susceptibility to temptation, because God is doing a good work in you.

He will complete it through the day of Christ Jesus. Don't be afraid. Help is on the way. It's always near. Psalm 46, verse 1, "He is a very present help in trouble." And we, as according to this text, we have a champion. We have a pioneer who went before us. He succeeded where others failed.

Having passed all of his tests, he turns back to offer help to us. He's done the deepest work of bringing a propitiation for our sins before God. He's done the deepest work, dying on the cross and now he does the lesser work, but a continuous work of helping his brothers.

Earlier in my life, when I faced different tests, training programs in the military or schooling or law enforcement, like lots of other trainees and students like me, I really wanted to talk to all the upperclassmen. I wanted to go and survey and interview and investigate those who had gone ahead of me, those who had passed the test and those who could give me advice.

I remember as a young guy in the Navy, I arrived at BUDS. BUDS is an acronym. Military is famous for acronyms, but it stands for Basic Underwater Demolition slash SEAL. So it's the entrance into six months training to get you to be able to pass and be able to go to a team and see if you can pass their test.

You actually get your try to be a SEAL. But I arrived at the initial training and we hadn't started training yet.

I arrived there on New Year's Eve weekend and they didn't know where to put me because everyone was gone. So they put me in the barracks of what was called the X division. And the X division for BUDS is the most depressing place on planet earth to be since that was exactly where all the BUDS quitters were barracked before they were being shipped back to the fleet.

The only advice that these quitters could give as they stumbled back into the barracks one by one, having drowned all their sorrows that weekend in booze, don't quit, man, don't quit. I was stupid. I heard that, I took that in and that may have helped my resolve. I was like, man, I don't wanna be here. I don't wanna be doing that. I don't wanna be going to the fleet.

But none of that really helped me to run an obstacle course, pass timed runs, succeed in my studies, pass dive medicine exams. To get through all those kinds of trials and pass my tests, I didn't need the help of someone who had failed. I needed the help of someone who had been through the same tests as were put before me.

They had faced them and they'd passed. That's who we have in Christ Jesus, who is our brother, our friend, our eternal high priest. For since he himself was tempted in what he suffered, he's able to come to the help of those who are tempted. And that's what we're gonna consider next time. Let's pray.

Our father, we're grateful that you have given us Christ Jesus, our redeemer, the propitiatory sacrifice, who by his work is forgiven us of our sins. The one who died in our place, the one who was buried in a tomb, the one who's risen from the dead, who ascended to heaven. And right now from your right hand, he continues his loving ministry, a ministry of kindness and affection, gentleness, tenderness, compassion, and mercy, being a high priest.

Having lived through everything we've lived through and succeeded, passing every test, never failing once, he's able to sympathize with those who are tested and tempted. That he being without sin, he really is able to help us, lift us up, tell us how to walk, how to pass, how to live. So we thank you for doing the great work of saving us by Christ. We thank you that he counts us brothers and looks forward to that day when he has gathered us all to himself.

We around your throne, singing your praises forever and learning more and more about you, taught by Christ himself, singing with the song leader, Christ himself, rejoicing and being filled in our hearts with his joy and just an outpouring of pure undefiled gratitude.

We thank you for this great work. We thank you for the work of his high priestly ministry as he is to us, our prophet, our priest, our king, the one who ministers your grace to us. We thank you for him and just ask that you would encourage us even this week. In Christ's name we pray, amen.