

Hebrews 2:10-16

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[0 : 00] Well, what is the biggest problem facing human beings? People have all sorts of different answers to that, don't they? It could be the environmental trouble that seems to be out there. Hence the UN climate change summit before Christmas. For some it's a religion is the problem, causing fights and conflicts in the world. It might point to the bomb attacks in Istanbul today as evidence of that.

But actually if we stop and think for any length of time, we'll see the problem facing all of us, the problem we cannot escape, is the problem of death. So yesterday morning when I put the news on, the news was all about David Bowie dying. Today I look on the website and it's all about 10 or however many people dying in Istanbul. And actually none of us will ever escape death. We live in lifelong slavery to death as the writer here puts it.

Now we may not feel that, but actually if we stop for a minute and consider, so much of what we do is influenced by the fact we're going to die one day. Let's take a few trivial examples. If you look at the news, look at what people spend money on, look at what all the crises are often about. It's often about postponing death, raising money for cancer research, ploughing money into the NHS. It's all about staving off death.

What is the taboo left in our society? What's the one thing you can't talk about? Well, it's death, isn't it? We don't even say people die. We talk about people passing on or passing away. We don't use the word death at all.

And as for our slavery to the fear of death, well either we just avoid the whole topic of death, hence it's a taboo we can't talk about it, or we do things because actually our hearts, we feel one day we're going to die.

[1 : 44] So why do people walk out on relationships? It's because they think this is the only life they have and they want to make the most of it now. I read a fascinating statistic this morning that I think it's 11% of men and 6% of women in long-term relationships in this country all have private reserves of cash of up to 7,500 pounds they can use if they want to get out of this relationship.

That's not a great way to invest in a relationship, is it? Here, I've got my get out, I've got my escape route here. And yet that kind of mode of operating is driven by fear of death. This life is all I have, I need to make the most of it now.

Why do we lie? Why are we economic with the truth? It's because we don't want people to think worse of us. Because actually we think this is all we have in this life and people's view of us now is all important.

So in many ways we are slaves to the fear of death even if we don't see it firsthand. That's what you might want to think about later. So who can rescue us from this big problem?

From this ultimate statistic that one in one people die? Who can rescue us from this slavery to the fear of death? This constantly being slave to thinking this life is all there is. Who can free us so we can live as true human beings and not as slaves?

[3 : 04] Well the answer in Hebrews 2, the answer throughout the Bible is one person can. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And here in these verses of Hebrews 2, the writer gives us two overlapping pictures of what Jesus has come to do for us.

And how he can rescue us. How he is our conqueror. In two back images. First of all he's the captain who rescues us. Verse 10 and verses 14 to 16.

But in the middle he's also the brother who identifies with us. So let's look at this. First of all he's the captain who rescues us. Look at verse 10. It was fitting that he, that is God, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Now that word translated founder is a word with a range of meanings. It's translated captain and leader in other places. So Jesus is in a sense the captain of our salvation.

The one who leads us to glory. And the one who liberates us from slavery. The two points he makes under this picture. So first of all he leads us to glory. That's what verse 10 tells us.

[4 : 14] That glory is the glory of restored humanity. Of being fully functional human beings. For being all that God intended us to be in the original creation. All that was lost through our rebellion against God.

All the writer has described in verses 5 through to 9. And when Jesus returns we all get to share in that glory. Everyone who's trusted in him will be made new.

Will be the glorious beings we were meant to be. No longer plagued by depression. Disease.

Sorrows we can't get rid of. No longer frail and weak and falling into sin.

We'll be glorious as he is. But here the writer says a couple of interesting things that confront us with questions. Doesn't he? He says it was fitting. That in bringing many sons to glory.

He should make the founder perfect through suffering. Now how can Jesus be made perfect? And in what sense is that fitting? That he should have to suffer? Well let me tell you first of all what being perfect doesn't mean.

[5 : 20] The writer doesn't mean Jesus became morally perfect through suffering. In fact he'll tell us over in chapter 4 verses 14 to 16 that he never sinned. He resisted all temptation. So it doesn't mean morally perfect.

It rather means complete in his qualifications. You know it's like when you're applying for a job. Especially for school leaders or graduates applying for jobs. They might have all the grades that are perfect.

But they've got no experience to do the task. And so they can't get the job. They need practical experience. To be able to prove that they are the complete candidate for the job.

And so it is here. Jesus was made the complete saviour. The perfect rescuer for us. Through his practical experience if you like. Over in chapter 5 verses 8 and 9 the writer tells us a bit more.

He says although he, Jesus, was a son. He learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, being made complete. He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey.

[6 : 23] Now the eternal son of God always obeyed the father. His coming into the world was in obedience to the father. But he then had to learn what that obedience felt like. In practice.

As a human being. Now think about why we disobey God. What are some of the reasons we disobey God? Those who want to obey. Well partly it can be weakness, can't it? I get tired and frustrated so I get angry with the kids.

Sometimes we find it hard to obey when it's costly. When to admit we're a Christian. Or to admit that we hold to biblical views on things. Will mean others ostracise us.

Or we miss out on promotions at work. And sometimes it's hard to obey when it requires faith.

When it requires faith to give money away to God's mission in the world.

Rather than to hold on to it. To believe that does something. Well Jesus learned obedience in the weakness of being human. He learned it when it was costly. When it meant going to the cross.

[7 : 21] He learned it when it required faith. When in the garden of Gethsemane he knelt and prayed. Trusting that the father would indeed restore him. So that's what it means for Jesus to be the perfect.

He became the complete saviour. Perfectly equipped to rescue us. Because he shared in our humanity. Not only that. How is it fitting then. For God to make Jesus the complete captain of salvation.

Through suffering. I mean some people say it's not fitting at all. Richard Dawkins our favourite arch atheist. Wrote that the Christian teaching on Christ's death. Was vicious sadomasochistic and repellent.

Even some Christians. Some who claim to be Christians. Claim the idea of Jesus dying on the cross. To pay for sins. Cosmic child abuse. So how could this writer claim it was fitting.

Maybe you think. I can't believe in a God. Who demands a sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. Surely if God is God. He can just click his fingers and forgive. Can't he? If he's that loving.

[8 : 24] Let's think about that for a moment. If God just forgave you. Just without any cost at all. Then how would you know he was loving. How could you tell he was loving.

See forgiveness always costs doesn't it. Always costs to forgive someone. For a wrong they've done to you. And you can tell they love you. When they forgive you. Even when it's costing. And so it is here.

It's because God is loving. Because he is love. It costs to forgive. Back in the Old Testament. In Exodus chapter 34. God described himself.

As keeping steadfast love for thousands. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he will by no means clear the guilty. Because God is loving. He wants to forgive.

Because God is loving. He can't just let the guilty off. How would it be loving. If God just welcomed Adolf Hitler into heaven. Without any kind of. Punitive payment.

[9 : 21] For those six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. And because God is loving. Because he cares. Because forgiveness is costly. Because justice needs to be done. It was fitting.

It was appropriate. That the captain of our salvation. The great rescuer. Should suffer. It's only through his suffering. That God's justice can be satisfied.

And God's love can be gratified. And so Jesus. As the captain of our salvation. Leads us to glory. Glory. It's what the father wanted. Through his suffering.

That's what he's doing. But not only does he lead us to glory. As verse 10 tells us. But verses 14 to 16. It shows. He liberates us. From slavery. He leads us to glory. He liberates us from slavery.

Look at verse 14. 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.

[10 : 17] That is the devil. And deliver all those who through fear of death. Were subject to lifelong slavery. You see why the eternal son of God took on human flesh.

So he could die. To set us free. But do you notice that the surprising way the writer describes the devil. Describes the devil as the one who has the power of death.

Now in what sense does the devil have the power of death? Well let me be clear. He does not naturally hold the power of death. God gave death as a punishment for our rebellion.

However death is the basis. For the devil's power over us. It's not his own authority. But it's our sin. That leads us.

Into death. And that gives Satan this power over us. Let me use this illustration. Imagine for a moment. A celebrity or a politician. Who's been caught having. An adulterous affair or something.

[11 : 14] And someone gets hold of this information. And starts to blackmail that person. At that point. This celebrity or politician. Is a slave. Held in fear.

To the blackmailer. But does the blackmailer have an authority. And a right to that? No. It's the celebrity or politician's. Sin.

And wrongdoing. That has meant their slaves. It's their moral failing that's led them into that position. And so it is with the devil. He's able to accuse every human being. Of being a sinner.

You can accuse me of that every day. And he'd be right to do so. Because every day I sin. And so in that sense. He holds the fear of death.

Holds us in death. Because we deserve to die as sinners. He uses that fear of death. To enslave people. But.

[12 : 08] But. Jesus has come to set us free. To deliver us from that power. Imagine for a moment. That we are all in this room. And someone comes. With a gun.

To take us hostage. Now sadly that's been a. Real experience. Not far from here. Isn't it? In Paris. But imagine that. Imagine this guy comes in. Holds us all at gunpoint. How could we be set free? Well someone would have to come in here.

Disarm the man. I've seen he is a man. Get rid of his weapon. Take him out and defeat him. And then lead us out of here to safety. That's what needs to happen.

And that is what Jesus has done. That's what's described here. In verse 14. In his death. Jesus took away. The power of death. So through death.

It says verse 14. He might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil. The apostle Paul in Colossians. Says that through the cross. Christ defeated. All his enemies.

[13 : 05] That's through dying. Through taking that punishment of death for himself. It means Satan is disarmed and defeated. He can no longer hold death over us. As a just punishment for our sin.

Why? Because Jesus has taken that death. Satan is disarmed and destroyed. When Jesus rose to new life. He broke the power of death completely. We cannot be enslaved by that anymore.

And so now he's able to lead us to freedom. As verse 16 puts it. For those of us who are offspring of Abraham. That's those who believe God's promises. Jesus takes hold of us.

Helps us. Literally takes hold of us. And leads us. To freedom. And so what? Why is that important? Why is it important that Jesus can lead us to glory?

As verse 10 tells us. Or isn't it true that actually everyone is looking for glory in one sense? Some of us look for glory in having a career.

[14:04] That makes us feel good. That establishes us in the eyes of other people. Some people look for glory in their possessions. If I have the right lifestyle. The right products.

That will be freedom. Some of us look for glory in belonging to the right social group. I know someone at school. Who is frustrated in the social group she's in. And wants to be in a smarter group.

Those kind of dynamics don't just affect teenage girls. They affect all of us, don't they? We want to think we're in with the right people. We all long for glory and be free from suffering as well, don't we?

Free from a world where there is so much pain. The message here. Is the only one who can lead us to glory. Is the one who has defeated the devil. And suffering in our place.

Jesus Christ. The God-man. We cannot free ourselves. By our work. By our education. By our meditation. By our spiritual disciplines. By our going to church.

[15:02] So only Jesus can free us. He is the captain. He leads us to glory. He liberates us from slavery. But having said that. That can seem very distant.

Very far off, can't it? I don't know about you. But I've not met that many heroes in my life. Although I know many people who want to claim. Even I do this. I can claim I was at school with one of Scotland's greatest rugby players.

That's as close as I come to heroism. And sometimes heroes can feel very distant, can't they? Yet the writer goes on to say that not only is Jesus the captain of our salvation.

Who leads us and liberates us. He is the brother who identifies with us. You see that there in verse 11. For he who sanctifies, that is Jesus, who sets us apart for God's.

And those who are sanctified, that is those of us who are believers. Doesn't mean we're perfect. That means we're set apart, belong to God. All have one source. That probably means God the Father.

[16:01] In whose family we're adopted. Or it could mean we all share flesh and blood. Because Jesus came to share flesh and blood. So we can be part of his family. By the way, it's pointing at the close identity between Jesus and his people.

What he came to share as he stood alongside us. Now when you think about Jesus, what words come into your head to describe him? Assuming you're a Christian at least.

There are all sorts of words, aren't there? Lord, Saviour, Master, Prophet, Priest, Shepherd, King. All those are true. But do you see what word this chapter tells us to use?

Brother. Brother, verse 11. Brother. That is why he's not ashamed to call us brothers. Now I have two brothers. And they're both very respectful people in various ways. And I'm not ashamed to call them brothers.

But they're both much older than me. So when I turned up at school, they'd already left. And in some ways I had to deal with some of the flack of what they'd been like. At least with one of my brothers. However, I can imagine it's really useful going to school.

[17:05] If you've got an elder brother up to school. It could be really useful, couldn't it? I don't know if you had that situation. But if you've got a good elder brother, He might show you the ropes. He might help you out with things when you're stuck.

If there are bullies causing trouble, to have a much bigger elder brother to stand there next to you and put them in their place, it would be quite handy, wouldn't it? However, if your elder brother was ashamed of you, little sister, little brother, it might be awful, mightn't it?

You might feel very much on your own. And yet look at Jesus. He is not ashamed to call us brothers. I give Jesus a reason to be ashamed of me every day.

Every day. Every moment of every day, pretty much. Jesus isn't ashamed to call us brothers. He says we're all part of the family. I'm with you. You're mine. I love you.

I am not ashamed of you. And in verses that are quoted here, in verses 12 and 13, it shows us what it means for Jesus to be our brother. It shows us he sings with us, and he stands with us.

[18:10] We'll go through that very quickly. First of all, he sings with us. Verse 12. He's not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name, that's God the Father's name, to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise.

There's a football match. I was at Brentford versus Huddersfield before Christmas, and at the point at which it was 3-0. I think you just about hear the Brentford supporters singing to the Huddersfield supporters about, why aren't you singing anymore?

And often we feel like we don't have a reason to sing. Like Huddersfield supporters when they're 3-0 down. And sometimes as Christians, we don't feel like we've got reason for singing, do we? Sometimes we can feel like life is against us.

Like God has abandoned us. And that's where this verse comes in. It's taken from Psalm 22 in the Old Testament. That psalm is the psalm that Jesus quoted as he was dying on the cross.

It begins, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And yet it ends with praise and rejoicing. So as Jesus sings this psalm with us, to us, he says, I will proclaim, I will tell of your name to my brothers.

[19:14] God's name is his character. So what it means is Jesus is kind of coming alongside us, singing with us, encouraging us to sing. It's as if he's saying, I know you don't feel like singing right now.

I know you feel like God has abandoned you with the struggles you face in life. I know you feel like you're overwhelmed. But trust me, I know his name, I know he is faithful and full of steadfast love to you and will keep his promises.

I know that because I was abandoned so that you don't have to be. I was abandoned on the cross and yet he was faithful and raised me to life again. Come, sing his praise with me.

So he sings with us. He's leading our singing. As we go to church on Sunday, whatever we feel like, Jesus is in that congregation singing with us, singing for us.

He sings with us. Not only that, as a brother, he stands with us. Verse 13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, behold, I and the children God has given me.

[20:14] Now those verses are taken from Isaiah chapter 8 in the Old Testament. The context at the time is most people were fearful, they were scared of Syria invading from the north and they abandoned hope in God really.

Apart from Isaiah and a few with him. And Isaiah says, I will put my trust in God. Behold, I and the children, not just his physical children, but the other believers whom God has given me.

In uncertain times, there were the faithful few who were still trusting God. We may feel completely outnumbered. The Christian life can be daunting, can't it?

There's so many uncertainties around, we can feel like we're the only Christian in our office, or the only Christian in our family. You can sometimes wonder if it's worth holding on to this faith. And at that moment, Jesus stands with us as our brother.

Even when we feel like the faithful few facing an uncertain future. He says, I will tell, I will put my trust in God. Behold, I and the children you have given me.

[21:20] So when our faith feels fragile, when we find it hard to praise God, we can keep leaning on Jesus, our complete Saviour. Because he was God in the flesh.

He is God in the flesh. He came to be the complete conqueror we needed. And to be the big brother we need. He has defeated death, defeated Satan, delivered us from death, delivered us from slavery.

He's the captain who leads us to glory and liberates us from bondage to fear. He's the brother who identifies with us. What else could we want? What else could we need?

Where else could we go to find such a Saviour? Let me pray.