

The Pioneer of Our Salvation

Christ is Enough Series

Hebrews 2:10-18

Pastor Bryan Clark

We are different in so many ways—different stories, different backgrounds, different opinions, different experiences. But there is a way in which we are all the same. One day, every person in the room will die. There's also a sobering reality that every person in your life that you dearly love will, one day, die. It doesn't really matter if you're rich or poor, black or white, male or female, doesn't matter if you spend every day in the gym and eat everything healthy possible or if you spend your lives in a La-Z-Boy eating ice cream. Everybody will die. That's what makes our text this morning so very important. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews, Chapter 2. We're continuing our study in the book of Hebrews. It's a very complex text, like many in Hebrews. We'll just take a little bit at a time. The last part of Verse 9 stated:

...that by the grace of God He (Jesus) might taste death for everyone. (*NASB, Hebrews 2:9)

The first century Jew was not expecting that from their Messiah. Even though the Old Testament prophecies were clear, it's not what they expected. They did not expect a Messiah that would die. They certainly did not expect a Messiah that would die a horrific death on the cross. So you can only imagine someone responding by saying, "Why would God do that?" If this was God in the flesh, why would He do that? Let's pick it up, then, in Verse 10:

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things,

The answer: It is **fitting**. The Greek there is it is *appropriate*; it is *consistent* with the nature of God. Why would God do that? Because that's who God is. He's a gracious, merciful, forgiving God. It's His nature. It's consistent with who God is. What verse 10 says is the God who created the universe, the God who is at the center of the universe—that's who He is. One of the things that has helped me a lot over the years in processing this magnificent truth of all that God has done for us is where Ephesians says that He has lavished His grace upon us. One of the reasons we struggle is because we have a tendency to make it all about ourselves, and so we kind of wrestle with, "Why would God do that?" We make it all about ourselves. But when we begin to realize it isn't all about me—never has been—it's about God and it's about God's glory and it's about God's desire to put His grace on display for His glory. It's the very essence and nature of God. When I can get away from the fact it's not about me, I'm merely the recipient of God being God and putting His grace on display.

...in bringing many sons to glory,

Sons here, we could say *sons and daughters*. It's talking about all of us that are believers but it's important to remember in the first century culture, only a son was a full heir to the family fortune. That's why, often, the reference is to *sons*. It's not really a reference to our gender; it's a reference to the reality that we've become a legal heir to the family fortune. So if we say His children, *sons and daughters*, we just can't forget that piece. That's what Christ has done—has made us His children, and what the text says: in order to bring us **to glory**. In other words, in order to make us absolutely *glorious*. How did he do that?

...to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Now, when we see the word **perfect**, it gets confusing. We talked about this in chapter 1. So, like in chapter 1, verse 4 it says **...having become much better**. Here the text seems to be saying *having now become perfect*, so it's confusing. It's like, "I thought He was God. I thought He was the eternal God. How does He become **much better**? How does He somehow become **perfect**?" Again, the reminder is that it's not talking about the essence of the Son of God. He is fully God in every way. He's the eternal God. That's not this discussion. It's about the reality that, at a time in history, the eternal God entered into time and space and took on human flesh. So the idea is that there was a time when He took on human flesh and He accomplished the mission and He completed it—what we refer to as the *work of Christ*. And so there is a sense in which there was something He came and He accomplished and then He returned to the Father, and those terms are a reflection of the work of Christ and the completion of such. So the word **perfect** is actually a word that means *to complete*. As a matter of fact, our mission statement says, "*Seeking to present every person complete in Christ,*" and comes out of Colossians 1; it's the exact same word. So it's the idea of completion. He accomplished; He completed the mission. How did He do that? By being the **author**. Now this is a very interesting Greek word. It could be translated *champion*. It could be translated *trailblazer*. Most scholars seem to favor the term *pioneer*. That's basically the idea. He blazed a trail; He was a pioneer to bring forth **salvation**, and it would require **suffering**.

So, Verse 10 is pretty complex, but what it basically says is the God of the universe, because of who He is, determined to make His children absolutely glorious. To do that He had to complete the assignment and blaze a trail as a pioneer to offer salvation—and that would require suffering.

Verse 11:

For both He who sanctifies (that's Jesus) **and those who are** (being) **sanctified** (that's us as believers, His children) **are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,**

**"I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE."**

And again,

"I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM."

And again,

"BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME." (Vs. 11-13)

So Verse 11: **He who sanctifies**—Jesus—and those who are sanctified—His children—are all from **one**. Now I use the New American Standard and it says *Father*, but you'll notice *Father* is in italics, which tells you that's not actually in the Greek text. Whatever word is in your translation, it should be in italics because the Greek literally says *all from one*. And then there's lots of discussion as to what that's a reference to—one Father? One God? One humanity? What is the reference? I think what makes the most sense because of the context of the conversation—the context of the conversation is why Jesus, why the Son of God had to become a man and suffer—so the idea is that both He who sanctifies—Jesus—and those who are sanctified were all from one, meaning one humanity—that we're all flowing from Adam. It's just a reference that the one who sanctified us had to become human to do that because we're human; therefore we're all from one.

Verse 12 is a quote from Psalm 22, which everyone agrees is a Messianic psalm. In essence Jesus is the one talking, saying that He will stand among His children—that's the congregation—and lead us in worship as the *pioneer*. He became one of us to blaze a trail and, as one of us, He will stand in our midst and He will lead us—the congregation—in worship. Verse 13 is from Isaiah chapter 8, and basically the context of that is Isaiah was fearful that an invasion was coming, and all they could do was trust God. The writer pulls that quote out, and in essence is saying, “As the pioneer, as one who became human, Jesus pioneered—He led the way to show us how to trust God.” He trusted God and He showed His children how to do it. That's the basic idea of verses 12 and 13.

But I want to go back to a statement that I think is just astonishing, and that's at the end of verse 11: **...for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren**, in other words *His children*. So the mission was to make His children absolutely glorious, in order that, when He stands with His children as one of them—human in every way—He will stand and say, “I am not ashamed to call these people My children.” Now this has meaning to us, but it's helpful to get the background to better understand.

So, we in the West are considered to be a *guilt/innocence* culture. That's just what defines us. A lot of our theology uses this terminology but the majority cultures of the world today are what are called *shame/honor* cultures. Going back to the first century, the Bible was written in the context of a *shame/honor* culture. One of the significant differences is a *guilt/innocence* culture is very individualized. It's about *me*. It's about *me and my relationship with God*, and a lot of our theology is, honestly, probably too much that way. But in a *shame/honor culture*, it's all about the *community* and it's all about, “As I stand before the community, am I shamed or am I honored?”

So now stop and think about what the text just said. In essence what it's saying is, “As a result of the trailblazer who has trailblazed, He has pioneered the way of salvation through suffering. He has become one of us and, at the end of the story, He will stand with us as His children and He will say to the world, ‘I just want you to know I count it an honor to call these people My children.’” In the first century culture it was the sinners—the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the outcasts, the lepers, the untouchables that were so attracted to Jesus. In twenty-first century America it's the disenfranchised; it's the used; it's the abused, the forgotten, the rejected; it's the hurting, the struggling, the betrayed. It's those who look in the mirror and think, “I'll never measure up.” It's those who have always wanted to belong but they've felt like they've never belonged, those who always wanted to fit in but they think they'll never fit in, and those who have never measured up. It's those people—sinners, misfits, and losers—who have been set apart and made right by the power of Jesus who one day—at the end of the story—there will only be one opinion that matters. And as one of us, He will stand in our midst and He will say to the world, “I just want you to know that whatever you thought of these people, I consider it a great honor to call them My children.” It is an absolutely magnificent statement! Verse 14:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, (that's us, we're human) He Himself likewise also partook of the same,

To do this, the eternal God had to become human flesh and blood, and it's good to remind ourselves this morning we're not talking about temporarily. We're not talking about the fact that He became human for thirty-three years. From the moment the Son took on human flesh, He would be the God-Man in every way, for the rest of eternity. It's astonishing!

He...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. (Vs. 14-15)

Why did He do that? In order that He might conquer sin and death once and for all! To do that, He Himself had to become human. This goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. Adam, because of his sin, plunged the human race into sin, and we feel the effects of that in our world today. But before you can even turn the page of the Bible, God makes a promise that one day, through the seed of a woman—that means a human—He would bring forth one who would crush the head of the serpent—the devil—and He would ultimately win. This is now saying Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. To accomplish the mission, the eternal God of the universe had to become human, take on human flesh—fully human in every way—in order to be the pioneer, in order to be the trailblazer to conquer sin and death once and for all, to crush the head of the devil and to set us free from this fear of death that keeps us enslaved!

In 1973 Ernest Becker wrote his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death*. It's a fascinating book all about the fact that everybody knows, at the end of the story we die, and people try a hundred-and-one different ways to figure out how to live with that. Some just purely live in denial. How many people do you think have given more thought to their retirement plan than to what's going to happen after they die? That's denial; it's pretending it's not going to happen. The second chapter in the book is called "The Terror of Death." No matter how we try to deal with it, deep down we all know it's true. We're going to die, and the people we love most in the world around us, they're going to die. In the Roman Empire people lived in terror of death. It was a bloody, difficult empire. These people were headed into severe persecution, and the fear of death was very real to them. So the God of the universe took on human flesh to blaze a trail, to conquer sin and death once and for all—in order that death might be defeated!

"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" Paul says in 1Corinthians 15. It's very important for us to anchor down, as we talked about last week—to anchor down to these great truths in our most difficult moments of life. I can't tell you how many times I've stood at the graveside with a family and friends mourning someone dearly loved, and reminded them this is not the end of the story; this is not where the story ends. Death doesn't win. Death puts a pause on the relationship—and it is a painful pause—but the story isn't over. It doesn't end here. For those that are in Christ, death has become a gateway into the presence of God. Death doesn't win—and that sets us free from slavery, from the fear of death—that we might live! The worst that this world has to offer us is the fear of death, but when I realize death doesn't win, it's only a pause in the story. But the story ends gloriously. Throw the worst you have at me, but God wins, because at the end of the story, it is glorious! Jesus has conquered sin and death! But to do that, He Himself had to become human and blaze the trail. Verse 16:

For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

Jesus did not do this for the angels. He did not become an angel; He did not provide salvation for the angels. He did this for people made in His image—the descendants of Abraham—meaning all of us who believe and become part of the promise to Abraham. Verse 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.

In order to do this He had to become human in every way—that's what he just said—in order to be the high priest, **to make propitiation for sin**. Now that isn't terribly meaningful to us, but it would have been very meaningful to the first century readers. They would have clearly understood the imagery. For hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years the priests would have daily functioned in the temple. The high priest was the boss priest, and it was the responsibility of the high priest—once a year and once a year only—to enter behind the veil into the Holy of Holies—the place that housed the very presence of God—to offer the sacrifice for sin—that the sins of the people might be paid for, might be atoned for one more year. The word **propitiation** is also sometimes translated *mercy seat*. It means a *lid*. It's a reference to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant that sat in the Holy of Holies. The idea was this is the place where the presence of a holy God would meet sinful men and women because, somehow, their sin was covered. But there was a reminder this had to be done year after year after year because it was merely a foreshadowing—it was a picture of the fulfillment of the promise God made all the way back in Genesis 3:15. Jesus, then, is identified as the fulfillment of the promise. He came to earth, and became a man. He became the high priest who would offer the ultimate sacrifice, and the sacrifice was Himself, and the mercy seat was the cross. Jesus, because he was fully man but had no sin, did not have to pay for His own sin, so He could pay for the sins of the world. The first Adam plunged the human race into sin. The second Adam—the final Adam—set them free by dying on behalf of the world, which He told us in Verse 9.

The idea of a **propitiation** is *the paying of a debt*; literally it is *the satisfying of God's wrath or God's judgment*. Some people say the appeasing of God's wrath, but that's not quite correct. It's not just appeasing; it's satisfying. So the idea was that because Jesus was fully human, He could die on our behalf. Because He was sinless—had no sin of His own to atone for—He could die for the sins of the world. He would blaze a trail to salvation. The evidence that God found the sacrifice satisfactory is that three days later He rose from the dead, having conquered sin and death! He blazed the trail to eternity, returning to the Father, now seated at the right hand, indicating mission accomplished once and for all!

The whole idea of **propitiation** is the reminder again that somebody had to pay the debt. Sometimes people will say, “Why couldn't God just forgive? Why was that necessary?” Well, there are a couple things to think about. One is: when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, agonizing about what was to come, He actually asked that question. “Is there any other way?” And the fact that He went to the cross is the answer: There is no other way. He had to become human and pay the debt for salvation to be offered. But it's also helpful to realize this idea of why couldn't God just forgive has no basis in reality. What do we mean by that?

Many of you are familiar with this illustration, but it's simple and it helps us understand this. Let's imagine, after the service I'm backing out to go home and I back into your car and I put a big dent in it. Now we have a problem. There are two options on the table. One, I can pay to have your car repaired. That's justice; that would be right. The second option would be you can say, “Don't worry about it; I'll take care of it.” That would be grace and mercy. But the fact is that means you're going to pay for it. Either you pay for it by losing the value of your vehicle or you pay to have it fixed, but then you're paying for it. The one option that's *not* on the table is we can't pretend it didn't happen. It did happen, so somebody must pay.

We crashed into the holiness of God, and there is a massive debt to be paid. So, what are the options on the table? You can pay your own debt; that's justice, and you'll pay for that forever, or you can accept that God, because He's gracious and merciful, took on human flesh and He Himself died to make payment for the debt in order to satisfy God's wrath, His judgment, so that God could be just and still turn around and offer salvation freely as a gift, because somebody paid the debt on your behalf. But, in order for that to happen, He had to become human; He had to suffer; He had to die. He rose from the dead and returned to the Father, seated at the right hand of the Father—mission accomplished! Verse 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.

That word translated **tempted** is a Greek word that, throughout the New Testament is translated *tempted, tested, or tried*. It's the same word; it just depends on the context. So in this case, it's probably all of that—because Jesus became human, because He suffered, because He was abused, He was rejected, He was beaten, He was brokenhearted. Because He experienced the real stuff of life, He was *tempted*; He was *tried*; He was *tested*. Therefore, when we cry out, we're not crying out to some abstract God that feels nothing. We are crying out to one who has taken on human flesh and He has walked on this earth. He knows pain; He knows suffering; He knows heartache; He knows loneliness. He identifies with the pain and the struggle; He has lived it Himself and then some. Therefore, it is a God who can identify with our struggle.

So here's the question: If this is true, that the God of the universe who created everything, who is at the center of everything, actually took on human flesh, why would He do that? Because that is who He is; that's His essence, His nature! He did that in order to make payment for sin, in order to conquer sin and death as the trailblazer—once and for all—that we might follow that path and experience His salvation, He did that in order to make His children glorious; He did it so that one day He can stand with His children and say to the world, “I just want you to know, I am just so honored to call these people My children.” But until that day, He's one who can identify with our struggle. He's felt the pain; He's lived the struggle! If all of that is true, remind me, what is it you're going through today that's just, somehow, too much for this God? If not Jesus, *where* are you going to turn? *Who* are you going to turn to? If this is true, can't we collectively say in our hearts, “In our most difficult moments of life, no matter how hard it is, we do believe Christ is enough!”?

Our Father, we sometimes just struggle to comprehend the wonder of what we have just learned. Lord, give us the faith to believe that is just who You are—to make your children glorious, to the praise of Your glory! But, Lord, it cost! It cost a great price to conquer sin and death once and for all so that we can live in hope. God, give us the faith and courage to believe in our most difficult moments in life, Christ is enough! Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.

(Bryan):

So, years ago Amy worked for us. She was part of our staff here, and we loved Amy. Amy's an amazing person—talented, full of life. I think Amy is very special. She means a lot to me. I would wish with all my heart that Amy and Doug could live a long, full, happy, healthy, life together and finish their life together riding into the sunset. It's what I want. But, as you know, we don't always get what we want. This is Amy's story.

(Video):

So it was October, and I found a lump. And it was, maybe, the size of a pea. I didn't think much of it. That was on a Thursday. By Monday I'm standing in my kitchen getting ready to go back to work and the phone rings. It was my doctor and the first question out of her mouth was, "Are you home alone?" And I...I lost it! I screamed, "No," at the top of my lungs, because you just know; you know what they're going to say. "You have cancer!"

So we go to the surgery center—my husband and I—and we're sitting there waiting. And to the door, to call my name, is my surgeon. You know, he walks us back and he said, "Well, we're not going to be going to a table. We're actually going to find some place private to talk. One of the final tests came in, and it revealed that you have triple-negative breast cancer, and what that means is, the worst thing for us to do today is surgery."

And I just sat there, like, "That's not the plan. The plan was, I'm going to come here and you're going to get rid of this cancer, and what you're telling me is, now, you're sending me home with cancer. That...that's not the plan!"

So, in the last four years I have been in treatment all but a cumulative of eight months. I have had more radiation than the typical person has and will never be able to have any more. But, for four years I have had to look in the mirror at an open wound. It doesn't go away. It just keeps screaming at me, "You have cancer. Don't forget...you have cancer!"

It got to the point one day when I pulled over on the side of the road. It was time for me and God to have a talk, and I shut off the car and I just screamed at Him! I just let Him have it! It was like, "God, this is too much. I don't know what is going on. Every turn we take, we have to go back. My body is tired, Lord. My mind, my heart, I'm just done! I don't know what... I don't know what to do. And I can't let down, because so many people depend on me, Lord."

I know He heard me, and the answer has been slow in coming. There's this tree out in my pasture, and I told my husband he's not going to cut it down—because half of it is dead and half of it is living. And that tree speaks to me every day because I am going from death into life. God just brings this peace. He is right beside me. My prayer is for me to be completely healed in my body. I want nothing more than to be here and watch my girls graduate college. But when I say God may heal my cancer, I may only find healing in heaven, and I'm learning to be okay with that. See, Jesus is enough for my healing, but He knows what that healing is going to be.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2018 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.

The Pioneer of Our Salvation

Christ is Enough

Hebrews 2:10-18

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What do you think the average person thinks about the idea that the God of the universe became a human to die for the sins of the world? Why?
2. What are the different ways people today try to cope with the reality that one day we'll all die?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 2:10-18. Review what the writer said about Jesus in Hebrews 2:9.
2. One can imagine the readers or critics responding to 2:9 by asking why? Why would God do that? Compare 2:10 with Ephesians 1:3-8; 2:1-10. What did God do and why did He do it?
3. In what way was Jesus the "Pioneer" (author) of salvation? Relate that to the Psalm 8 quote in 2:6-8. What has He completed? What trail did He blaze for us? Compare with I Corinthians 15:20-28.
4. In 2:11 the writer tells us that Jesus is not ashamed (honored) to call us as believers His family. What does that do for you emotionally? What does Jesus offer you that many others in our society don't offer you?
5. What did Jesus do to set us free from the fear of death? Compare with I Corinthians 15:53-57. How did He do this according to Hebrews 2:17?
6. What is the practical application of 2:18 for you? Explain.

