

# **The Founder of Our Salvation**

## **Hebrews 2:5-18**

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Good morning. For those of you who don't know, my name is Tobias. I'm the Associate Pastor here at Christ the King, and this morning we're going to be continuing with our study of the book of Hebrews. And last week when Penny walked us through Hebrews 1:4- 2:4, if you were with us, then one of the things you probably remember is that there the author of Hebrews exhorted us to pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it. And as he did this, he used the word salvation two times. First in verse 14 when he made the point that angels are ministering spirits who serve those who are to inherit salvation. And second, in chapter 2 verse 3, when he made the point that it would be a grave mistake if we were to neglect such a great salvation. And in our passage this morning, we're going to hear him mention that word once again in verse 10, as he calls Jesus the founder of our salvation.

So what does it mean for Jesus to be the founder of our salvation? Why is it important? And how does it provide us with comfort and hope? I invite you to open up your Bibles, if you haven't already, to Hebrews chapter 2, and we'll read verses 5-18.

“For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers; 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 God has given me.”

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, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Let's pray.

*“Almighty God, we bow before you, the one true and living God, creator of heaven and earth, knower of all things seen and unseen, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. We praise you, we bow before you, and this morning we thank you for your word which enriches our lives, which teaches us your story, and we ask, Lord, that by your spirit you will open our eyes and ears to it this morning. We ask, Lord, that we will through it come to learn more about who you are, what you have done for us, and what you call us to be as your people. And Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.”*

Well, as I was reflecting this week about what it means for Jesus to be the founder of our salvation, I started thinking about the different ways our English translations capture that word, founder, which shows up in verse 10. It also is going to show up later on in chapter 12. Some translations take it to mean an author and others an originator or a pioneer, and still others a champion. And it occurred to me that while these different words have nuance, no question, what they all share is that they point to a person we simply couldn't do without. I mean, it's pretty obvious to us that people like authors and founders and champions are necessary, right? I mean, after all, without them, we'd have no books, we'd have no institutions, and we'd have no victories. And as I was thinking about this, my mind immediately went to one of the great heroes of the 20th century, Ernest Shackleton, the famed Irish explorer of Antarctica. And I think it went there partly because he's made the news once again with the recent discovery of his lost ship, the Endurance. Maybe you've heard this, but it's more than that.

You see, in the early part of the 20th century, Shackleton and his crew had set out to traverse the continent of Antarctica, but disaster struck. Their ship, the Endurance, got locked in the ice, and there they were, trapped. How would they survive? How would they make it home? Safely. Well, we don't have time for me to spend detailing the adventure, but it's an incredible one, I can assure you. And if you're familiar with it at all, then you know that Shackleton's crew thought of him as a man they simply couldn't do without. I mean, it was Shackleton and no one else who enabled them to endure the loss of their ship, hundreds of miles of dead reckoning navigation on the southern seas, and nearly 500 days of bitter and hostile Antarctic weather. They spent nearly two years in frozen isolation and abandonment, and yet not a soul was lost under Shackleton's leadership. His courage and his unyielding determination, they're epic, so much so that the Antarctic explorer, Raymond Priestley, later on, he praised upon him as he compared him to other famous explorers. He said, “give me Robert Scott for scientific method, Roald Amundsen for speed and efficiency, but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.” What a hero.

Indeed, he was a man they thought they couldn't do without, and yet Shackleton was, after all, just a man, wasn't he? And perhaps in these last few moments, your mind has turned to someone you think you couldn't do without. Perhaps you've been thinking about your beloved spouse or your parents or perhaps a particularly loyal friend or a patient boss or an impactful teacher, and please don't misunderstand please don't misunderstand me. Without a doubt, by God's design and kindness, these people play deep, lasting, truly significant and meaningful roles in our lives, and yet like Shackleton, these folks, however beloved and impactful, they are only men and women. They're boys and girls, and while at times we might think we couldn't do without them, we need to remember that they are, after all, only mortal. They are flawed human beings. They are subject to the dictates of time and to the pressures of

temptation, just like you and I are, and because of that they can never be, and they were never meant to be, the ultimate source of our safety and our satisfaction.

And you know, the author of Hebrews, he understood this, and in our passage this morning, we see him urging his readers, and he's urging you and me as well, to set our eyes upon and to put our hope in not another created being, but the one person none of us can truly do without, Jesus, the founder of our salvation. And you know, there are so many things we could reflect on in this long passage, but I think there are two things in particular that form the heart of what the author wants us to see, and they're these. First, I think he wants us to see that Jesus, as the founder of our salvation, has truly been exalted and reigns in glory even now. And second, he wants us to see that in order for Jesus to be exalted and to take his place as the founder of our salvation, it was necessary for him to suffer death. So let's take up that first point, which comes especially in verses 5 - 9. You'll notice in verse 5 that he starts by picking up again the theme of Jesus's supremacy over the angels, which he'd left off in verse 14. And we hear him say, "for it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking." Now, I think he says this for at least two reasons. First, as Penny's already mentioned in the last two weeks, the audience seems to have had an unhealthy preoccupation with angels and their power. And this could be for a host of reasons.

But I think one of them could be that they viewed angels as holding positions of authority and rule that enabled them to provide special hope to people and special deliverance in time of need. And, you know, this kind of makes sense. After all, in Daniel 10, the angel Michael is called the prince of Greece, who's sent to Daniel to deliver him from the prince of Persia. And if you haven't read Daniel 10 in a while, it's a bizarre one. But in light of this, given their present circumstances of persecution, to me, it's not unlikely that the readers of Hebrews were being tempted to look to angels, perhaps like Michael, for their deliverance rather than to Jesus. And here, the author of Hebrews wanted to nip this temptation in the bud. And so he says to them, "it wasn't to angels that God subjected the world to come," as if he's saying to them, "look, y'all, I know you're suffering, but relying on angels for your salvation isn't the answer. They're not the ones who are going to be in charge." But this brings up the second reason the author says what he says in verse 5, and that's this.

He wants his readers to make a crucial connection between the exalted reign of Jesus, their present difficulties, and their hope in his deliverance. And to do this, he says something in verse 5 that seems rather odd. He reminds them that what they've actually been talking about so far is the world to come. You might say, "really? What's he talking about? When did he mention the world to come?" Well, if you look back up at verse 13, where the author has God the Father speaking the words of Psalm 110 to the Son, you'll notice that there's a future component to the Lord's reign. After all, the Father says to the Son, "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." That until there is important.

You see, there's finality, there's consummate victory over his enemies that still remains for the reigning Son. And the author of Hebrews understood this. He understood that redemptive history isn't yet complete. It's moving toward a time of perfect fulfillment. There's a world coming where all God's enemies have been vanquished, all God's people have been gathered in, every pain has been softened, and every tear has been wiped away. A world where the Son's enemies have been finally and completely made his footstool. And no doubt, hope in this world to come, in this glorious kingdom of salvation, was something that the readers shared with the author and they longed for. And yet, in the midst of their suffering, as they looked out upon a world filled with injustice and pain, a world which to their eyes hardly

reflected the present righteous rule of the Son, it seems that they were in danger of losing their trust in the Lord. And perhaps they'd begun to doubt if his reign was real and if his deliverance would ever come at all. And so, to give them assurance of the Lord's glorious world to come and to prove that their hope in Jesus wasn't misplaced, in verses six through nine, we see the author drive home the point that Jesus reigns even now. There's no reason to doubt. And he does this by applying Psalm 8 to Jesus.

How does this work though? Well, Psalm 8 is a psalm of David, and in it we hear David praise the heavenly majesty of the Lord. And in the midst of his praise, David's left wondering why the Lord would have a care for human beings at all. And it's not that he doubts his care, he's assured of it. He knows the Genesis account of the creation of man. His own words here in this psalm are a reflection on it. And so he knows that God made Adam, and indeed all of us, in his image, and he gave him dominion and a place of honor over all the creatures of the earth. And what's especially useful about this psalm for the author of Hebrews is that it reaffirms that God had intended something special for man, who was his special creature. Everything had been made in subjection to him, and God intended for him to rule the earth in righteousness and in obedience to him. This was man's original calling. It was his creational vocation. And yet it was a vocation which, because of disobedience, we know he failed at miserably. And so what we see the author of Hebrews doing here with this psalm is using it to highlight this original God-given vocation of man, and he's applying it to Jesus.

You see, he knew that in his incarnation as the Son, Jesus had taken up God's original vocation for us, and he fulfilled it perfectly. And this is why we see him, if you look at verse 9, applying the very language of this psalm, which spoke of the original state of Adam, to Jesus as he says, but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor. Friends, what Adam failed to do and what you and I fail to do, Jesus has done. And because of that, he's been crowned with glory and honor, and he's already, even now, ruling as creation's rightful king. But we need to keep something in mind here. You see, although Jesus reigns even now, there's a future component to his reign, as we've already seen in the quotation from Psalm 110. His rule isn't yet fully realized, and we still live in a world filled with suffering and injustice. And friends, because we look out upon the world and we see injustice and brokenness, it's often difficult for us, just as it was for the original readers, to see Jesus's present reign. And friends, when this happens and our vision of him becomes cloudy, our trust in him usually begins to waver.

And you know, the author of Hebrews, he understood this difficulty, and he put it this way at the end of verse 8. He said, "at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." You see, he acknowledged this difficulty, but what's important for us to see here is that this difficulty didn't cause the author of Hebrews to doubt the Lord's present reign. Instead, it encouraged him all the more to look upon Jesus. He says, but we see Jesus. Caused him to look upon him through the eyes of faith, to see him as the one who for a little while was made lower than the angels, but now was crowned with glory and honor, and to long for his return. Friends, what about you? In the midst of your trials, are your eyes fixed through faith on the exalted and reigning Son of God? Well, having considered this first point, let's move on and consider the author's second one, which he makes especially in the remainder of the passage, and it's this.

In order for Jesus to be the founder of our salvation, it was necessary for him to suffer death. Now, the author already hinted at this when, at the end of verse 9, he linked Jesus's exaltation

to his death, a death which the author said there that he tasted for everyone. But it's verse 10 where we hear him make this crucial link between Jesus's role as the founder of our salvation and the necessity of his suffering explicit. Notice what he says there. He says, "for it was fitting that he, 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, I think it's worth clarifying at the outset here that what the author doesn't mean about Jesus being made perfect, he doesn't mean that Jesus was in some way morally deficient, not at all. Instead, his point is that Jesus had a mission given to him by the Father, and that he willingly submitted to as the incarnate but it was a mission that would only be completed or fulfilled, that's what the word perfect means there, through his suffering. And yet, this raises an important question for us, doesn't it? Why? Why was it fitting? Why did Jesus have to suffer and die? Well, I think the author gives us two primary reasons and they are important for us to grasp.

The first one is this, Jesus had to suffer death in order to defeat the devil and to free us from his bondage. Notice what the author says in verses 14 and 15. He says this, he says, "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, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." It might surprise you to hear the author say that it's the devil who has the power over death, and that makes sense. I mean, after all, it's not the devil but almighty God who says in, for example, Deuteronomy 32-39, "see now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." And so I think the author's point here isn't that the devil has the power to inflict death, but rather that he uses our fear of death in order to wield power over us and to keep us in constant bondage to him. And you know, I love the way Amy Peeler reflects on this. I think what she says about it makes a lot of sense and is really helpful.

Listen to what she says. She says, "for the extent of their lives, humans are enslaved to this fear of death. The devil is able to inhibit the freedom of humanity because they live in fear of the inevitable. They will die, but when? Before that time, will they get to live a full life or not? And how will they die? In pain or terror? What will it be like to pass through death itself? Although it manifests in different ways in different times and in cultures, all humanity lives in response to the fear of their mortality. This fearful life lived under the shadow of death is the power of the devil." And friends, that's what Jesus has freed us from. He willingly tasted death on our behalf so that we might be freed from its crippling bondage. That's why he had to die. Friends, that's what the founder of your salvation has done for you.

But there's another reason the author gives us for why Jesus had to die, and it's this. Jesus had to suffer death in order to take upon himself the just punishment that we deserve. Notice what he says in verse 17. He says this. He says, "therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Now we'll have more to say about Jesus's priesthood in the coming weeks, but I want us to focus on that last bit, that Jesus had to make propitiation for sins. That word there, propitiation, it's a strange one, isn't it? But what it basically means is something like to bring about forgiveness. And that's what Jesus did as our high priest when he offered himself up. And here the author's picking up what he's already said in verse 3 of the beginning of the book when he said about Jesus, after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

And yet you still might be asking, why? Why did he have to do this for us? Well, friends, we've already seen when we looked at the author's use of Psalm 8 that Jesus willingly assumed our humanity in order to be our representative and to take up the original vocation we failed to accomplish. But as many of you know, part of our story as human beings is that in failing to accomplish this vocation through disobedience, a disobedience which the Bible names as sin against God, in that failure, we incurred the righteous judgment of God and the just penalty of death. The apostle Paul succinctly puts it this way in Romans 6. He says, "for the wages of sin is death." In other words, friends, we have a sin problem. A problem that we by ourselves, no matter how morally we try to live or how ingeniously we try to rationalize it away, we have a problem that we cannot escape and we justly deserve death because of it. But the author's point here isn't to have us dwell on that miserable fact.

Instead, once again, he wants us to fix our eyes upon Jesus, the founder of our salvation, who in his mercy and in his faithfulness and in his incarnation as the son assumed the role of our high priest, he received the punishment for our sin in his death on the cross and made forgiveness his free gift to all who would put their trust in him. Perhaps you're here today and you're struggling with what you've just heard. Perhaps the idea that Jesus had to suffer and die for your sake seems either unjust or simply too good to be true.

Friends, as we close, let me ask you to direct your attention once again to verses 9 and 10. And as you scan them, I want you to let these truths sink in. You see, the God who is exalted above the heavens and the God who made you and me and the God whom we have sinned against, this God really and truly desires to bring us, to bring you and me as sons and daughters into glory. It's incredible. Let that sink in. And although the death of his son was certainly unjust, it isn't too good to be true. Instead, friends, it's the measure of his love for us. In fact, it was, as the author of Hebrew says here, it was his grace to us. You know, C.S. Lewis once summed up these truths this way. He said, "the son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." And friends, that's what the founder of our salvation has done for us. Through faith in his suffering work on our behalf, he's brought us into his family, the family of God. And he's not ashamed to call you and me his brothers and sisters. So let me ask you again, are your eyes fixed on Jesus? Are you seeing him for who he is? The only person we could never do without. The exalted son of God, the founder of our salvation, made perfect through his suffering. Let's pray

*Almighty God, O Father, we bow before you. We praise you for your mercy and grace. You are a God full of mercy and grace, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. And the measure of that is in the giving of your Son, the founder of our salvation, Jesus Christ. We praise you for your kindness to us. And we ask, Lord, that you will grow us in your grace. We pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.*