

Hebrews 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 January 2018

Preacher: Rt Rev Andy Lines

[0 : 00] Thanks, Alan, very much indeed. Do keep that Bible reading open. If you've done what I often do, which is slam the Bible closed at the end, do please find the passage.

It's on 1201. Thank you, Martin, for the invitation to preach and to open God's Word today and indeed to be with the vestry yesterday. And thank you for a new passage that I've not worked at before.

May I also take advantage of the opportunity to thank you here at St. Silas for your partnership in the gospel and particularly for your support in recent, this last year, for the work of I Serve Africa. You'll find some details over on the table, as I indicated before. Well, I've certainly needed God's help as I've tussled with this passage, and I think we ought to pray again now that as I preach it, and we all seek to understand and obey it.

Let's pray. Father, open our eyes, we pray this morning, that we may behold wonderful things in your Word.

[1 : 13] For Jesus' sake, amen. Well, last week, Martin began a series in the book of Hebrews, and he started with a talk of a one-month gym membership.

Those who start the year full of good intentions, appreciating our need for fitness, but who fizzle out within a month as the month progresses.

I have to say, I stopped my gym membership on the second day of the year, but it was last year's membership, and I felt I wasn't getting good value for money from it.

But the point Martin was making was just how easy it is to drift away in our Christian walk as it clearly was for the recipients of this word of exhortation that we have here in Hebrews.

Hebrews. The Hebrews had, as you will see as you go through the series, they had been prepared to suffer for the gospel, but now they were drifting.

[2 : 22] Drifting, not abandoning, not deliberately rejecting, they were drifting. It's a question I always ask the mission partners associated with Crosslinks, both in their interviews, but also when I see them and visit them wherever they are, I ask what they believe and whether they still believe it, because we mustn't assume that once you have believed something, you will always believe it, and that's what the issues in the Anglican Communion are all about today.

Well, the prescribed remedy, as Martin pointed out last week, was, as it says in chapter 2, verse 1, to pay most careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.

The Word of God is vital, and Martin underlined for us three reasons from chapter 1 and this first part of chapter 2 why we should do that. The finality of God's revelation in the Son of God, the majesty of that Son of God as a member of the Trinity, and the severity of the Son, all focusing, of course, on the importance of listening to the Lord Jesus because of who He is.

He is the Son of God. He is a member of the Trinity. He is, as it says in chapter 1, verse 3, the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His being.

Well, today we're looking at three further reasons for paying careful attention to what we have heard. But this time we're focused more on Jesus' humanity.

[4 : 08] Well, I want to ask us a question as we come into our subject then this morning. How is it that we, here gathered in Glasgow this morning, value people? Is it by looks?

Whether that person is handsome or something else. Is it by dress? Do they dress coolly or in some other way?

How do we judge them? Do we judge them by color, by sex, by the type of handshake or greeting we get? Is it by the type of phone that they possess or by the job that they do?

What is our first question when we meet someone new? It's quite revealing about us. In the case of many people I'm associated with, it's, well, what do you do?

Because we want to be able to work out how to categorize people by the identity which we assume is carved by what they do.

[5 : 12] Now, my wife Mandy and I spent a year together while I was still serving in the British Army. And one of the things that she, she enjoyed many things about that year, but one of the things she loathed was the sort of label that she had.

And in fact, in some cases it was actually written on a label, it was W slash O, wife of. Whose wife are you? So, as if her identity depended somehow on me and what I did and not on her in her own right.

And she didn't like that. Well, these days there is a big industry dedicated to helping us to enhance ourselves in the eyes of others so that we look better in the eyes of others than perhaps we should do.

And these are the kinds of ways that humanity tends to go when we are part of a society that rejects God and His view of us.

And when that happens, then alternative theories such as that we are temporary blips in a particular context and history, we are cosmic accidents, these are the kind of arguments that can hold sway when we live as we do in a society which largely is rejecting God.

[6 : 36] And if this is so, then it's no surprise that when we look at humanity in these terms that we seek to do things like iron out the imperfections of people before they're born.

We try and do self-selection so that we get everything right or that we should economize on care for the elderly or those with disabilities who do not contribute maybe in the same way to the material well-being of society.

These are all symptoms of a society that is rejecting God. And yet deep down, we, each of us, have some sort of sense that we should be valued, not by what we contribute, but just we should be valued.

For example, we naturally think that it is wrong that we should benefit from child labor in some Bangladesh factory or something like that.

That's a natural instinct. We don't need to be Christians to think that. Well, the Bible would agree with that gut instinct. And the author of Hebrews poses a key question in chapter 2, verse 6, in quoting from Psalm 8 that we said earlier, what is mankind?

[7 : 59] And he goes on to show that God has an extraordinary purpose for humanity and that this purpose was accomplished in and through Jesus Christ, the man.

Well, we'll now look at what that purpose was in this passage and how Christ achieves it. So, first of all, God's great purpose for humanity is accomplished in and through the man, Jesus Christ, verses 5 to 9.

He starts with this, it is not to angels, in verse 5, it is not to angels that He, God, has subjected the world to come about which we are speaking.

Now, the world to come that is referred to there refers to the inhabited earth. So, subjecting is the same as managing or ordering the inhabited world.

And he uses the words to come because he's referring to a renewed world that God's people will inhabit and take care of.

[9 : 14] Now, angels are magnificent creations of God and have a huge power given to them by God and we can see that in the Bible, but God has not subjected the world to come to angels.

They are messengers, nothing more. But we humans were meant to manage the creation from the beginning. What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you should care for him. You made them a little lower than the angels. You crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet. Hebrews, quoting Psalm 8.

Humans have been put on earth with a specific purpose of looking after God's world in God's way. What a privilege that is. and to be thinking of being crowned with glory and honor.

Well, it's all a product of, as we were told in Genesis chapter 1, of being created in God's image. We manage His creation on His behalf.

[10 : 29] That is and always has been God's great purpose for humanity. But, in putting everything under them, as it goes on to say in our passage, God left nothing that is not subject to them.

Yet, at present, we do not see everything subject to them. And that is clearly the case, isn't it? Not everything is subject to humans.

We may have made huge advances in terms of benefiting from the sun's power and employing solar power or new designs of aircraft or David Attenborough being able to go deeper than ever before or new drug and medical treatments.

But that rule is not over everything. Instead of mastering the environment, we're often the victims of snow, of volcanoes going off in Indonesia at the moment or of water shortages in southern Africa. And many inventions that we have brought into existence are used more to develop horrific new weapons than employed for good.

[11 : 46] And so we get tweets like my button is bigger than your button. Well, why this incredible failure to exercise the amazing privilege of management of God's creation on his behalf?

Well, it's because of the spiritual infection introduced by human beings called sin from the time of Adam and Eve onwards, a rejecting of God's ultimate authority and rule and designating for ourselves the rulership, actually putting ourselves under the devil as we'll see later in our passage by trying to wear the absolute crown that belongs to God alone.

Well, sin, as I've just described it, is not actually mentioned in our passage until verse 17 but death is mentioned. It's mentioned in verse 9 where the author speaks of Jesus' is suffering death and tasting death for everyone and then in verse 14 where death is mentioned three times emphasizing Jesus' full humanity but death is part of Jesus' full humanity because death is part of human reality as a result of our rebellion.

The Bible tells us very clearly that the wages of sin, of rebellion against God is death. So we see that God's great purpose for humanity made in God's image was to manage God's creation and what a great privilege and honor that is not even granted to angels but because of this sin because of sin death has entered the world and we cannot be masters and death is reminding us of just that fact.

well the question then is how can things be put right? Humanly speaking that's impossible but if Jesus as we heard last week is God's final word of revelation in chapter one we now learn he is also the key to our redemption.

[14 : 09] So it says in verses eight and nine yet at present we do not see everything subject to him but we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For a short while Jesus the eternal son of God was made a little lower than the angels as he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary. Well the gospels contain much and ample testimony to Jesus' humanity.

He grew tired, he was hungry, he was weary, he was limited in time and space. He had to put up with his relatives and his disciples and in the gospel accounts though we also see an example of what man was meant to be before sin entered.

You see Jesus did do the very thing that we have failed to do. He used his powers for the benefit of the weak and the despised. He showed and demonstrated control of nature.

He calmed storms, he raised the dead, he healed the sick, he freed the demon possessed. But he still lived in a fallen world where the devil's power still held sway.

[15 : 36] Not everything was subject to Jesus during his life on earth. Until that is he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Now of course death could not hold the only man who did never deserve to die. He was raised and exalted and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Crowned as we've seen in our passage with glory and honor. the very intention that God had for humanity. Jesus you see is the second Adam the one who lived out God's great purpose for humanity.

But why did he become human and why did he taste death so that he might do it on behalf of everyone?

He is the means of our salvation the rescue that we desperately need. And the author of the Hebrews uses three pictures in the remaining verses just to describe how Jesus achieved God's purpose as he puts it in chapter 2 verse 10 to bring many sons and daughters to glory.

[16 : 53] So the second part therefore is how Jesus achieves God's purpose to bring many sons and daughters to glory verses 10 through to 18.

In verse 10 it begins in bringing many sons and daughters to glory it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through

what he suffered.

Now when he says perfect he's not suggesting that Jesus was in any way imperfect but that he brought the task of salvation to completion through his suffering he became the perfect savior one commentator Leon Morris puts it like this sufferings introduce a new perfection a perfection of testedness there is one perfection of the bud and another of the flower in the same way there is a perfection in actually having suffered and which is not implied in any previous perfection but adds something to it so three pictures of what Jesus does to achieve this the first is that of pioneer verses 10 to 13 now a pioneer is someone or some group or something that goes before to prepare the way so in world war ii the

RAF had pathfinders who would go ahead of the main fleet of bombers to drop flares on targets and mark those targets so that those who followed could aim their bombs more accurately another example would be an icebreaker going through the pack ice it goes ahead of ships that therefore are able to follow or thinking of my own background of working in South America for time for a while the country of Spain was known by the motto *ne plus ultra* which means nothing beyond because in those days people thought that there was nothing beyond Spain Spain was about as far as you could go because there was nothing further west other than sea but after Christopher Columbus and others had inverted commas discovered South America I think there were people there before Christopher Columbus but let's say in 1492 he at least arrived in

South America and then came back Spain changed its motto to the words *plus ultra* there is something beyond Spain notice that in each case the pathfinder or pioneer is of the same type as those who follow so an icebreaker is a ship and it is followed by other ships a plane marks a target for other planes Christopher Columbus came back so that others could follow and that is what Jesus has done for us he has gone ahead through death and on to glory it is a wonderful passage in John chapter 14 and verse 3 where he says if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may follow may be where I am but it was vital that Jesus did that pioneer role as one of us which was why God the Son became human and that is what stressed in verses 11 and 12 he is the one who makes people holy and yet he is the same family as those he makes holy so Jesus is not ashamed it goes on to say to call them brothers and sisters and in verse 12 and 13 finishing with here am

[20 : 59] I and the children God has given me quoting from Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8 and showing that Jesus was fulfilling what the Old Testament prophecies had said would happen you see Jesus will not lose any of his family along the way it requires however trust to follow a pioneer but what more trustworthy pioneer do we have than Jesus the man he's done everything necessary what a wonderful news isn't it what wonderful comfort it doesn't depend on us we can have complete confidence in this pioneer but only in this pioneer there's no one else Jesus the man pioneered our salvation second picture that this passage gives us of how Jesus achieves God's purpose to bring many sons and daughters to glory is that of a liberator verses 14 to 16 since the children have flesh and blood he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death that is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death for surely it was not angels he helped but

Abraham's descendants well I don't know about you but I have certainly been struck this week by the news filtering out of California of the antics of David and Louise Turpin who seem to have held their 13 children aged between 2 and 29 years old captive for years some evidently chained to their beds three chained to their beds when the police broke in in squalid conditions and freed only after a 17 year old amongst them escaped and and the police thought that 17 year old was a 10 year old because of her emaciation what a terrible thing to happen what a terrible place to be in that house and and it's not the first time that something like that has emerged in different parts of the world but the writer of the Hebrews brings home to us that actually all of humankind is subject not to that sort of slavery but to a spiritual enslavement earlier in chapter 2 in verse 3 the author asks how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation we do not feel our need of a rescue we're not going to look for one and of course as proud human beings that we are we don't naturally feel enslaved any more than the

Jews of Jesus' time felt enslaved but this passage clearly says that we are held in slavery by our fear of death the one who holds us as slaves is the devil who holds the power of death and enslaves us by our fear of death not necessarily the process of dying but rather more the haunting question of whether death is the end or whether there is something beyond it's a fear that held

many pagans of the first century captive and it still holds many 21st century people captive too despite many of our advances in technology and everything else there's nothing we can do about it we do need someone to rescue to liberate us well as we've seen if we sin we pay the penalty the penalty of death but what if someone else could pay the penalty on our behalf well that person would need to be a human a path finder a pioneer because sin is human and a human must pay the price of sin this person would need to be uniquely perfect we've seen that humans do not are not naturally perfect and therefore this person needs not to have to pay the penalty of sin for themselves this person needs to be more than just human if they are in some senses to represent us before

God well there's only one possible candidate for that role the Lord Jesus Christ perfect God and perfect man in one person the freedom he wins by his death is for the descendants as we're told in verse 16 of Abraham not angels and we're not just talking of the physical descendants of Abraham the Jews but all humans who put their trust in this pioneer this pathfinder who goes ahead on our behalf let me let you into a little secret of mine it's a story of me when I was a small boy I once tried putting a stick into a wasp's nest in the ground I was with some friends who were like minded because we wanted to see what would happen well not unpredictably wasps are not that keen on this kind of invasion of their privacy and decided to give chase

I was the slowest runner so I got badly stung what do I do I go to the nearest teacher for help he then got stung as well well imagine that was not a wasp's nest but a bee's nest now the difference between a bee and a wasp is a bee can only sting once because once it stings the sting comes out and pulls out the innards of the bee at the same time and then it dies well just imagine it was a bee's nest and that only one bee managed to escape from my attentions and gave chase I ran to the arms of the teacher and the bee stung him well in my real story my problem was that wasps can sting again and again and they did so but bees can only sting once so when that bee stung my teacher it would have been unpleasant for perhaps more than unpleasant especially if he went into anaphylactic shock and died but as he took that sting he took what

[28 : 11] I deserved for the sin of poking the nest and I was freed from my fear of bee stings well it's a trivial example isn't it but it is an example of what Christ did for us in this picture so the second picture then we've looked at a pioneer who goes before we've looked now at a liberator who frees us from the fear of death by taking the sting of death and the third and final picture is that what I've called a sympathizer verses 17 and 18 it's not got a good ring to it a sympathizer because of the derogatory use use of the word so often so we talk perhaps or we would have talked of nazi sympathizers or perhaps more recently of is sympathizers someone who supports the ideology of nazi ideology or of is sympathies it need not however be negative the word sympathizer comes from two words which mean feeling together well verse 17 says this for this reason he that's

Jesus had to be made like them his humanity fully human in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people because he himself suffered when he was tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted in the old testament the high priests had to be related by blood with the people that they represented and the high priest would offer sacrifices to God on behalf of those others in the people of God and as humans high priests in the old testament knew what it was like to be tempted and weak and so the high priest was just like the people who on whose behalf he was carrying out sacrifices so he didn't go to make sacrifice for the people from a position of smug superiority

I don't need this but this is for these guys but he went as a sympathizer feeling together with the people that he represented he understood himself and he understood people well well now we have Jesus as our high priest it's a major theme that you'll come to as you go through this series in Hebrews he is both priest and the sacrifice and he is now as we've seen in glory we can come to him in prayer in full knowledge that he understands and sympathizes because being a human he has been through it all himself I interview and support mission partners at different stages in their service and they know the ones that serve with crossings that I have been a mission partner myself in South America for nine years

I faced the difficulties of learning a language and of a culture of living far away from my relatives and I hope that makes me sympathetic to the trials that they face but what a sympathizer we have in Jesus he is human just like us he was tempted and suffered and yet he didn't suffer because of his own sin but because he's like us he is able to see us through he is warm compassionate and

wonderfully understanding he is not only merciful as high priest but also faithful and was able to take the sting of the wrath of God against me but from a just God and so make atonement for the sins of the people now a year or so ago a

Christian acquaintance of mine by the name of Edward Coombs who was a vicar in the south of England died aged 49 of cancer his last words were recorded as this Jesus is everything he could say that because he personally knew and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his pioneer who'd gone before him through death who as his liberator had taken the sting of the fear of death from him who as his sympathizer understood what he was going through and was able to propitiate to appease the wrath of God by his death on his behalf in his place and thus restore him to a right relationship with God well we've seen that God's great purpose for humanity was accomplished in and through the man

[33 : 39] Jesus Christ as he pioneered our salvation freed us from fear of death and is our sympathetic high priest I cannot think of a better reason why we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away so whether you are here this morning as a Christian as a follower of the Lord Jesus but in danger of drifting or you are a non Christian facing the inevitable punishment of sin for our rebellion against God do take today as the opportunity to draw near to this Jesus with full confidence and overflowing with gratitude and do not delay let's pray father father help us we pray to respond appropriately to your word and most particularly to all that you have done for us in the man

Jesus Christ for Jesus sake amen to