

Hebrews 2:5-18

Introduction

We come to another great passage about Christ and His glorious achievements. Last time it was His deity, this time it is His humanity – partaking of flesh and blood, pioneer of our salvation, victor over the Devil, and the first mention of His high priestly work. Four wonderful achievements are mentioned – going to look at first three briefly, and concentrate on the fourth.

He regained man's lost dominion

Psalm 8 is quoted. **Man was created a little lower than the angels; and crowned with glory and honour; and set over the works of God's hand** (Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:5-6). That dominion and glory was lost at the Fall. Sin had robbed man of his place and glory. Man was not what God had meant him to be from that point on. Into this situation came Christ. **He tasted death for every man** (Hebrews 2:9).

“A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came”

He suffered and died and is now in glory. He did this to rid men of sin and restore them to God's purposes. Glory and honour crown Him. One day all things will be subdued under Him, His kingdom will be fully established. Then God's purpose for man will be completed.

He created a family of brothers

Christ bringing many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10). There needed to be a pathfinder or file leader, a trail blazer or pioneer. Christ's suffering made Him able to blaze the trail to salvation for others and lead them to glory. Through His death, Christ became pioneer of their salvation. He had been perfected, i.e. made adequate or able, fully equipped to be the leader to glory. He has passed into heaven, and He is at the head of the great procession leading the rest. They have all been made a family of brothers by His death.

He has delivered men from fear of death

On Good Friday, Christ's cause seemed lost. But the Devil, who had power of death, over-reached himself. On the third day, God raised Christ from the dead, Christ defeated the devil, and robbed him of his power. Now He is able to **deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage** (Hebrews 2:15), bondage to the fear of death.

John Bunyan tells of Christian and Hopeful at the 'River of Death'. They asked if the waters were all one depth. The answer was “No, you shall find them deeper or shallower as you believe in the king of the place”. Christian was able to say with confidence, “I see Him again, and He tells me ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee’.”

As believers one by one touch the brink of that river, they will hear their victorious Lord say **Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death** (Revelation 1:18). So the place of death becomes the gate of life.

*“He held, in hell laid low
Made sin, He sin o’erthrew
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so
And death by dying slow” [some words unclear]*

Therefore the incarnation and atonement restored man to the position God designed. Jesus became the head of the band of brothers, and head of the procession leading them through to glory. He robbed the devil of his power, and can deliver us from fear of death.

Now going to consider in more depth the fourth wonderful achievement of Christ listed in this chapter. It is connected with Christ as High Priest (a prominent theme in the epistle, first mentioned here), merciful to men and faithful to God. **He was made propitiation** (N.B. *not* A.V.’s “reconciliation”) **for the sins of the people** (Hebrews 2:17). Going to look at this in two halves – He suffered, and He is able to succour.

Jesus has suffered

He himself has suffered, being tempted (Hebrews 2:18). Not everyone suffers being tempted. For many, sin is to their taste, they enjoy it and the prospect of indulging in it. But to the godly man, temptation is a worry and misery. He hates the experience. Christ entered into this agonising experience fully, and more than we can understand, because of His sinlessness and sensitiveness to holiness. It was painful for Him to live and move in a world marked by sin. He was never hardened by his practice of sin. It was perpetual sorrow for Him to be in contact with sin.

His loathing must have increased ten-fold when He was actually tempted. But He did not yield, instead He suffered because of it. He was grieved and vexed and sickened by it, c.f. great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. He suffered by circumstances, and the poverty and temptation which that brings. He was tempted because of His incessant labours, c.f. He fell asleep in the ship, and the temptations which weariness and exhaustion brings. He faced temptations which arise from the reactions of fellow men – even His mother did not understand Him, His family thought He was mad, His friends were sometimes stupid and dull of mind, selfish, and in one case, treacherous. His enemies were the source of more temptations, with their taunts, abuse and murderous plans. He was tempted by the Devil, the very embodiment of all evil, who tried to divert Him from His life’s mission. Painful wrestling with powers of darkness. His ultimate suffering – His deep cry of anguish on the Cross, when He was forsaken by His Father. Yet this suffering was not in vain, because it fitted Him to be our great High Priest.

Jesus can succour

He is able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). Temptation is common to all and to Him. His temptations show us that temptation is not in itself sin, nor is it proof of displeasure by God. It need not lead to evil consequences, it need not lead us to despair. In this situation, Christ can succour us. He is perfectly well fitted to succour, and longs to do so because we are His people. He has a tender disposition. The man who has seen affliction has the disposition to cheer those who have been afflicted. Special ability to do so. Not everyone who visits us when we are in trouble is a suitable helper, and they can leave us feeling worse than we did before they came. Reason – they are not able to fit sympathetically into the position of the sufferer. But Christ, having lived a life of suffering, has the ability to enter into our experience. **He himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses** (Matthew 8:17).

*“He knows what sore temptations mean
For He has felt the same”*

Only those who have been through the same experience can sympathise at depth. A Christian worker visited a woman who had lost a little child. She tried with loving words of sympathy to console. The mother looked up with blinding tears and said, “Thank you so much, but then you are not a mother so you cannot understand”. The mother was looking for the tone and feeling that could only come from someone who had suffered as she.

Christ has been through all that we have, and suffered at a greater depth, therefore He has greater sensitivity, and His sympathy is real. How does He succour? He knows, He loves, He cares, He gives us precious truths which are a sweet antidote for the poison of sorrow. The Bible contains promises for every need. The Bible contains a key to open every drawer, to open gates for us to be free from sorrow. In our varied distresses, the richness of the Word of God can meet the variety of our need.

Sometimes Christ’s succour comes through other believers, people who always do us good. Sometimes God strengthens us inwardly, we are surprised at how we manage to bear our troubles. Bunyan spoke of secret supplies of grace imparted in a hidden manner. He used the picture of water being thrown onto a fire, and yet it kept burning – because behind the wall, secretly, someone else was pouring oil onto the fire to keep it burning.

Conclusion

Christ is able to raise us up, leading us to glory, taking away fear of death, sympathising and succouring in every situation. Are you weary and heavy-laden? Let us seek Him. He is able to succour. We can come as we are, we do not have to wait till we have more faith.

Where else is there to go? Men are no use, they are like broken cisterns. Better to go to the fountain. Where better to go? The more we are in despair, the more we are qualified to come to Christ. “I am lost”, said Whitefield’s brother to the Countess of Huntingdon. “I’m glad to hear it”, was the reply. “What a dreadful thing to say.” “The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost, and therefore I know he has come to save you.”

Let us stretch out our hands to Him who reaches out His tender omnipotent hand across the billows. Grasp the hands imprinted by the nails. And so exchange portions. He who has born our grief will load us with the gladness and blessedness which He had before the world began.