First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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HEBREWS: Jesus Is Better
Jesus is a Perfect Savior
Hebrews 2:5-18 (Part 2)

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In 2008, the American swimmer, Michael Phelps, dominated the Olympics in Beijing. He swam in 8 events and won 8 gold medals. He set 7 world records. It was amazing. I'm pretty sure Emily and I watched every one of his races. I vividly remember being in our living room and watching him swim. He'd come down the homestretch and touch the wall. And I'd jump up and raise my hands in victory and say something like "We won!" And then I'd chant USA over and over again. (at least that's how I remember it)

I'm a very slow swimmer and I can't do any stoke but the one that keeps me alive. Butterflies can do the butterfly better than I can. So, I've never even come close to swimming competitively, let alone in the Olympics. But somehow, I got to share in the victory of Olympic gold. Our entire nation got to share in the victory. You know why? Because Michael Phelps was one of us. His victory became our victory.

And Hebrews 2 tells us that something like that, on an infinitely greater scale, occurred when Jesus came to this earth as a man. He left His place of status and glory in heaven to become one of us. He entered our suffering. He entered our temptation. Ultimately, He entered our death. He came to defeat our enemy. He came to free us from slavery. He came to deal with our sin.
Jesus became one of us. And in His victory, we have victory. That's what our text for this morning is all about.

And before we look at our text for this morning, let me give you our big idea.

Big Idea: Jesus perfectly saves us so we can live in victory over Satan, slavery, and sin.

Hebrews 2:10-18
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. 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." 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, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 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. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Last week, we covered verses 5-13 and saw that Jesus is a perfect Savior who perfectly saves those who trust in Him.

This morning, we will focus on verses 14-18 and see several ways we are able to live in victory through the saving work of Jesus.

1. JESUS PERFECTLY SAVES US TO LIVE IN VICTORY OVER SATAN.

Hebrews 2:14
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, that is, the devil,

"The children" in verse 14 is a reference to everyone who will place their faith and trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We talked about that last week. When we trust Jesus, we are adopted as children of God. And we will one day inherit everything that belongs to God. Jesus became a son of man so that we could become sons and daughters of God.

But verse 14 adds a new dynamic to the mix. It says Jesus took on flesh and blood so that through death He might destroy the devil who has the power of death. The word "destroy" doesn't mean annihilate. It means to make someone's power or weapon inactive. In other words, it means to disarm them.

So, what's that mean? In what way does the devil have power over us in death? And, how does the death of Jesus disarm, or take away that weapon of the devil? One of the clues is found in verse 17.

Hebrews 2:17
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.

The priesthood of Jesus is a major theme in Hebrews. So, we will spend a lot of time talking about Him as our Great High Priest when we get to chapter 7. But I just want to point out that this verse is similar to verse 14 in that it's referring to the fact that Jesus had to be made like us by taking on flesh and blood. But, instead of saying Jesus destroyed the devil by dying on the cross, here it says he made propitiation for our sins. And I want you to see how those two things are connected. A propitiation is an offering that pleases, or pacifies, God and brings us peace.

For any of you who have children, you probably know the power of a pacifier. No one sleeps until the baby sleeps. When a baby is upset, you'll do whatever you have to do to get it to calm down. That's where the pacifier comes in. You give the baby the pacifier to pacify it – to please it and bring peace.

And that's sort of like a propitiation. It's an offering that satisfies God and brings peace between God and man. But God isn't a crying baby. He's the perfect, Holy Judge of every man, woman, and child. And since we have all sinned against God, His justice and holiness demand that our sin be punished. And Jesus came to sacrifice Himself by taking the punishment for our sin at the cross. When Jesus hung on the cross, God placed our sin on Jesus and punished Christ in our place. The death of Christ satisfies God's demand for sin to be punished which then brings us peace.
Listen to how Paul describes this in Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:13-15
And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

When we studied Colossians last year, we looked at this text, and I said that some of us live with a list in our heads and hearts of the worst things we have done. And we know God sees that list better than we do. And, since God is also the Judge who punishes sin, many of us live with this sense of justice hanging over our heads, like we are just bracing for the moment God decides to pay us back for the worst things we've done wrong.

And Colossians 2 acknowledges that there is a list of our sin. Paul calls it a record of debt.

In the ancient world, a record of debt was a document that recorded exactly how much someone had borrowed and any legal obligations that were attached to the repayment. And it was written by the person who was in debt. So, if in the future that person tried to get out of repayment, there would be a legal document written in their own handwriting to prove beyond any doubt that they were legally obligated to repay it.

And Paul says there is a record of every sin we've ever committed along with the legal demand for how it deserves to be repaid or punished. We aren't wrong to think there's a list of all our sin. And we aren't wrong to think God will demand that those sins be paid for. And that's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Jesus, we have Him!

You see, Paul says something has happened to that record of debt with its legal demands. Verse 14 says it's been canceled. That word "cancel" means "to wipe away and erase."

What is the legal demand for sin? It's death. It's suffering the wrath of God. And that's what Jesus did in our place. He died as a substitute in our place, and He died as a sacrifice – or propitiation – for our sin. Jesus shed His blood to wipe away our sin.

In His death, Jesus took hold of the record of our sins and the repayment the law demands. He held it in His hand and as they drove the nails through His hand, God was nailing our sin to the cross. <u>JESUS CAME DOWN FROM THE CROSS, BUT THE RECORD OF OUR SINS IS STILL THERE!</u>

It's set aside. It's no longer standing in between us and God. If you are trusting in Jesus and His powerful life, death, and resurrection – there is NOTHING standing between you and God the Father. Psalm 103:12 says it's as far from you as the east is from the west. And, although there may still be consequences in this life for the sins we have committed against others, in our relationship with God there is no condemnation and never will be for all eternity.

And that disarms the devil. It defeats him. Because the only weapon the devil has to harm you in death is by accusing you of the ways you've sinned against God and demanding that you be made to pay for those sins in eternity.

But Jesus represented everyone who would ever place their faith and trust in Him. Jesus went before God and offered a sacrifice for our sin that was pleasing to God. He nailed the list of our sin to His cross. So, when the enemy accuses us of sin in the presence of God the Father and demands our sin be paid for, Jesus steps in and points to His cross where the record of our debt now says, "paid in full."

Before we move on, let me ask you this question: What accusation from Satan do you need to answer with the finished work of Christ?

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more! Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, o my soul!

That leads to the second way our text says we live in victory through Jesus.

2. JESUS SAVES US TO LIVE IN VICTORY OVER SLAVERY TO FEAR.

Hebrews 2:15
and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Since Jesus has disarmed the enemy by taking away the threat of punishment after death, that means we no longer need to be afraid to die.

In some way, every fear is ultimately built off the fear of death. For instance, we might fear losing our jobs. And that fear has power because our jobs provide money so that we can have the basics of life – like food and shelter. And if we don't have food or shelter, we won't be able to live. So, the fear of losing our job is ultimately rooted in our fear of death.

Or some of us fear being rejected by others. That's because we were made to live in relationship with others. And not just other people. Most importantly, we were made to live in relationship with God. And our fear of being rejected by people is a reflection of the ultimate fear of being rejected by God – the fear of standing before Him at the end of this life and being cast away from His presence. There is nothing more terrifying than that. Every fear is in some way traced back or rooted in our fear of death.

But, because of the work of Jesus, we don't need to fear death. That's not to say we should be morbid or eager to die.

It simply means that when we understand that Jesus has turned death into a gateway that leads to eternal life and perfect pleasure in God's presence, we don't need to fear death. So, we don't need to live enslaved to the fear of death. We can be free to enjoy today and every gift God has within it. No matter what we might be facing in this life…no matter what we might suffer…our future is filled with glory and joy and eternal pleasure in the presence of God.

In the 1400s, a Christian woman name Julian of Norwich was suffering a severe, life-threatening illness. She was so close to death that her family gathered around her to surrender her life to the Lord. As she meditated on the certainty of Christ's work in those who trust in Him, she found amazing comfort and confidence in Him. And she wrote down a phrase that has brought countless believers comfort and confidence in their suffering. She said, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

She didn't say, "All things ARE well." She said, "All shall be well."

And there's a huge difference there because there are things that are not well right now.

- Sin is not well.
- Death is not well.
- Suffering is not well.
- Temptation is not well.
- Satan's work is not well.
- Human rebellion against God is not well.

But Julian's confidence was that none of those things will ultimately prevail. Jesus will have the last word – and for those who trust in Him, all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well!

You are no longer a slave to fear. You are a child of the Most High God and all shall be well with you in the end. So, what fear is holding you captive that you need to surrender to the certainty of Christ's work?

3. JESUS PERFECTLY SAVES US TO LIVE IN VICTORY OVER SIN.

Hebrews 2:18
For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Since Jesus became a man, He has experienced the pain and struggle of temptation. He knows what it's like. And, since He never yielded to temptation and remained sinless, He knows how to overcome it. And verse 18 says He is able to help those who are being tempted.

The word "help" means to run to the aid of those who cry for help. I think about Emily. I love our kids and I'm eager to help them in any way I can. But when I'm asleep, they'd better have a bullhorn if they need my help. But, not with their mom. She sleeps with one eye and both ears open. Our kids can lay in bed and whisper "help" and before they get to the "p" in help, Emily is already running down the hall.

Once, our daughter started crying in the middle of the night and Emily jumped out of bed and started running down the hall so fast that she missed the hallway and broke her nose running into the wall. We call that an eagerness to help. And that's the picture here of Jesus. He runs to the aid of those who cry out for help. Actually, He doesn't come running to you because if you are trusting in Him, He already lives within you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever help you need, He will supply – encouragement, strength, wisdom, joy, peace, comfort. The Lord is your helper. Cry out to Him in temptation and He promises to give you every help you need. Where do you find yourself being tempted today? Will you cry out to Jesus for help?

Friend, you can live in victory today. Victory over Satan. Victory over Slavery to fear. Victory over sin. Christ's victory can be your victory if you'll simply place your faith and trust in Him.