

“THE FOUNDER OF OUR SALVATION”

I. Introduction

- A. I've been doing a little reading about dogs in preparation for the puppy that we will be adding to our household within the next week or so.
1. In my reading, one point that has especially been impressed upon me is the importance of treating your dog like a dog instead of like a human being.
 2. I'm no dog expert, but that makes a lot of sense to me.
 3. Dog owners can create a lot of problems when they project our human nature onto their dogs.
 4. Dogs do best when their owners understand their canine nature.
- B. We find something similar to this in this passage from Hebrews.
1. In these verses, the author explains that human beings need a Savior who is truly human.
 2. This is why Jesus had to become incarnate.
 3. It is why he had to suffer in our flesh and blood.
 4. An angelic Savior would have been no good to us.
 5. A purely divine Savior would not have been able to help us.
 6. We need a Savior who was like us in every respect.
 7. This is precisely what God has provided for us in the gospel of his Son.

II. Made Perfect through Suffering

- A. The first question that I want to address as we begin our study of this text is this: what does the writer mean when he says that Jesus was “made perfect through suffering”?
1. Obviously, he cannot mean that there was any sense in which Jesus was lacking when it comes to his inherent holiness.
 2. That would contradict what he said about Jesus back in chapter 1: that he is “is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”
 3. Instead, the writer is telling us that Jesus became the perfect Savior by taking on our human nature, living a perfect life, and offering himself as a perfect sacrifice to pay for his people’s sins.
 4. Jesus’ human nature was unfallen, but it was not confirmed in righteousness and glory until he actually lived a perfectly obedient human life within history.
 5. Jesus was only made perfect, or complete, as our Savior after he had performed what was required of him in his office as Mediator.
- B. The writer also says that it was “fitting” that God made Jesus “perfect through suffering.”
1. In other words, this was the only way that God could save us.
 2. There was no other way.
 3. It was not one among many options.
 4. It was the only option.

5. That being said, it is also true that God did not have to save anyone.
 6. But he chose to bring many sons to glory by sending his beloved Son into the world.
 7. This is something that should elicit unending praises from us.
- C. We should especially consider this in light of what the writer says in verse 10: God is the one “for whom and by whom all things exist.”
1. God made the world and everything in it.
 2. He made it all for the sake of his own glory.
 3. The world exists for him.
 4. Yet he made it his purpose to bring “many sons to glory” through the suffering of his Son.
 5. It pleased him to share his glory with us, making us his adopted sons by uniting us with his only begotten Son.
- D. This is why Jesus is called the “founder” of our salvation in this text.
1. Other translations render this word as ‘captain’ or ‘pioneer’ or ‘author,’ and each captures different nuances of the original.
 2. The key thing for us to see is that this does not mean that Jesus merely cuts a trail for us to follow.
 3. While there is certainly truth in that, Jesus is far more than our example.
 4. Jesus has established the way of salvation for us.

5. He founded our salvation.
6. He authored it.
7. His suffering results in his bringing many sons to glory.

III. Adopted in Christ

- A. You probably noticed that there is a repeated emphasis on the theme of sonship in this passage.
 1. In Christ, we are adopted as God's children.
 2. Contrary to popular opinion, none of us is a child of God by nature.
 3. In our fallen estate we are objects of God's wrath.
 4. In the words of Robert Shaw, "Sinners are naturally 'the children of the devil', aliens to the family of God, and heirs of wrath; by adoption they are translated out of the family of Satan into the family of Heaven." [Robert Shaw, *The Reformed Faith*, 188]
 5. This adoption only takes place in and through Jesus Christ.
 6. And our adoption is made possible by the fact that we share a common origin with Jesus.
 7. Because of his incarnation, Jesus fully shares in our human nature.
- B. The writer tells us that by partaking of our flesh and blood and suffering in our place, Jesus consecrates us to God.
 1. This is what he means when he speaks of sanctification in verse 11.
 2. The reason why this so is important is because God is holy.

3. The only way we can enjoy fellowship with him is if we too are holy.
 4. Because Jesus became a real man, he can extend this blessing to us.
 5. He is the source of our sanctification, our being set apart as holy to God.
 6. Sanctification is an aspect of the salvation that Jesus has secured for us.
 7. While we are active in our sanctification, it is not something that we achieve by our own efforts.
 8. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 that Christ “became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” .(1 Cor. 1:30)
 9. We are made holy to God by virtue of the holy human life that Jesus lived.
 10. As Calvin explains, “we are united to the Son of God by a bond so close, that we can find in our own nature that holiness of which we are in want... If, then, we are sinful and unclean, we have not to go far to seek a remedy; for it is offered to us in our own flesh.”
- C. The writer of Hebrews further develops this theme of our union with Christ by citing three Old Testament passages in verses 12 and 13.
1. The first quotation comes from Psalm 22: “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”
 2. This is from the same psalm that Jesus quoted when he cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

3. The verse cited in our text comes from later in the psalm, after the singer's faith has been vindicated and he summons God's people to worship him.
 4. The point that the writer of Hebrews is making by referring to this verse is that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers.
 5. When you stop and think about this, it is utterly astounding.
 6. We are not even worthy to be called Jesus' servants, yet he calls us his brothers.
 7. What an honor it is to be brethren of the glorified Christ.
 8. As Calvin puts it, "Hence this title is the same, as though [Jesus] had raised us into heaven with himself."
- D. The next Old Testament quotation in our text comes from Isaiah 8: "I will put my trust in him."
1. While it might seem odd to think of God the Son saying that he trusted in God, there is a sense in which this was true as far as Jesus' human nature was concerned.
 2. Even though he was rejected by men, he trusted that God would vindicate him.
- E. The last quotation also comes from Isaiah 8.
1. It originally referred to Isaiah and the faithful remnant in Israel, who are described as his "children": "Behold, I and the children God has given me."
 2. The point that the writer is making by citing this is that we are the remnant whom God has chosen to save.
 3. He gave us to Jesus so that we might be saved through him.
 4. This brings to mind what Jesus says in John 6: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I

will never cast out... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." (Jn. 6:37, 39)

5. We were given to Jesus in the decree of election, when God appointed us to eternal life.
 6. The only sons whom Jesus brings to glory are those who were given to him by the Father, and he will bring every single one of them to glory.
- F. The writer identifies who these sons are in verse 17 when he says that Jesus does not help angels but the offspring of Abraham.
1. Who are the "offspring of Abraham"?
 2. It is not those who are merely Abraham's physical offspring.
 3. Paul makes this point clear in Galatians when he says, "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham."
 4. The offspring of Abraham are those who are justified by faith, those who rest upon Jesus Christ for their salvation.
 5. If your faith rests upon Christ, then you are one of the children whom God the Father gave to God the Son in eternity past.
 6. There is immense comfort for us in this great truth.
 7. It tells you that your salvation is not in your own hands, not in the least.
 8. It is firmly in the hands of Jesus Christ.
 9. God the Father gave you to God the Son, and the Son will surely save all of those whom he has been given.

IV. Freed from Death's Tyranny

- A. This brings us to verses 14-16, where the writer again emphasizes the necessity of Jesus partaking of our flesh and blood.
1. Jesus had to become fully human in order to be able to redeem our fallen humanity.
 2. This is why Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the fourth century theologians who opposed the Arian heresy, once wrote these famous lines about Christ: "What he did not assume (or take upon himself) he did not redeem."
 3. The only way Jesus could save us was by becoming human in every respect, except for our sin.
 4. The only way he could deliver us from death was by enduring it himself.
- B. Satan is described here as the one who has the power of death.
1. This is true in the sense that Satan is our accuser before God.
 2. Since the rightful penalty for sin is death, Satan is able to call for our death, both in the physical sense and in the eternal sense, before the bar of divine justice.
 3. But Jesus has stripped Satan of this power by paying the penalty of death in our own flesh.
 4. The wages of sin is death, but if Jesus has already received those wages in our place then we will not have to receive them ourselves.
 5. God will not demand a double payment for our sins.
 6. This is why the writer can say that Jesus has destroyed the devil.

7. The devil still prowls about, but he cannot bring any ultimate harm to those who have been given to Jesus.
 8. The devil's power to destroy us has been taken away.
 9. He is still our enemy, but he cannot prevail against us.
- C. Jesus has also delivered us from the enslaving fear of death.
1. To look upon the prospect of death apart from Christ is to live in terror of it.
 2. Even if they won't admit it, people are terrified by the thought of their death.
 3. They either avoid the subject altogether or they try to soften it by embracing sentimental ideas that have no basis in reality.
 4. But those who trust in Christ have the comfort of knowing that he has gone before us, not only enduring death but also emerging from it as the victor.
- D. We still have to face death.
1. This is because the corruption of our nature is so thorough that our bodies have to die before they can be fully liberated from the effects of sin.
 2. But for everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ, the sting of death has been removed.
 3. This is why the book of Revelation can refer to the death of Christians as the first resurrection.
 4. Paul even says that for the Christian death is the point when the mortal is swallowed up by life, and that being away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

5. Calvin sums up the biblical teaching on this by saying that Jesus has taken death, which in the hands of Satan is the gateway to hell, and has transformed it into the gateway to glory.
6. Of course, death does not bring us into the final state of glory.
7. That will only come when the dead are bodily raised and the final judgment takes place.
8. But the Bible assures you that if you are a Christian, you have nothing to fear from death.
9. You have the certain hope of resurrection, a hope that is grounded in the bodily resurrection of Jesus himself.
10. And you have God's promise that death will not separate you from his love for you in Christ.

V. Our Perfect High Priest

- A. We turn now to verses 17 and 18, where the emphasis is upon Christ's work as our high priest before God.
 1. The writer says that Jesus had to be made like us in very way so that he could be our merciful high priest.
 2. Because he has experienced what it is to be human, he understands our weakness.
 3. We can rest assured that he looks upon us with an understanding and sympathetic heart.
 4. Calvin writes, "Therefore whenever any evils pass over us, let it ever occur to us, that nothing happens to us but what the Son of God has himself experienced in order that he might sympathize with us; nor let us doubt that he is at present with us as though he suffered with us."

5. Give special attention to the last part of that quote.
 6. Jesus suffers with us in our sufferings.
 7. This is not just a manner of speech, like when people say, 'I feel your pain.'
 8. Jesus really is present with us in our suffering.
 9. We know this for a fact because of what Jesus said to Saul when he confronted him on the road to Damascus.
 10. Though Saul was persecuting Christians, Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4)
- B. Our passage also tells us that, as our faithful high priest, Jesus has made propitiation for our sins.
1. A propitiation is an offering that appeases the wrath of God and turns his just anger away from guilty people.
 2. Whenever we come across the word 'propitiation' in the Bible, we should be reminded that the supreme problem that our sin creates for us is not what it does to us.
 3. The supreme problem that sin creates for us is what it does to God.
 4. It incites God's holy wrath against us.
 5. It brings God's judgment upon us.
 6. But by offering up a perfect sacrifice in our own human nature, Jesus has delivered us from God's wrath once and for all.
 7. He has made propitiation for all our sins and has reconciled us to God.

- C. The fact that Jesus partook of our human nature also assures us that he is able to help us when we are tempted.
1. Jesus fully entered into our experience as human beings living in a fallen world.
 2. He never committed any sin, but he knew what it was to be tempted to sin.
 3. He knew temptations that were far greater than anything in our experience, yet he withstood them all.
 4. He had the strength to say 'No' to thirty-some years of temptation.
 5. We cannot even get through one day without yielding to temptation in all sorts of ways.
 6. We fail to do all that God requires.
 7. We do what God forbids.
 8. But the founder of our salvation has gone before us in our own nature, and he has triumphed over sin and death.
 9. This is why, as the author will say later in this letter, Jesus "is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him" (Heb. 7:25).