

“No Fear in Death”
Hebrews 2:14-18
(Preached at Trinity, November 5, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, **Verses 14-18** set before us one of the clearest descriptions of the incarnation of Christ.
Hebrews 2:14 NAU - "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,"
 - A. This describes the ὑπόστασις of Jesus Christ – the hypostatic union of Christ – the union of two natures in one person. The eternal Son of God became man – He took on a human nature while maintaining His Divine nature. It is mysterious but glorious to consider.
 - D. Jesus became mortal so that through death he would gain authority over death.
Hebrews 2:17 NAU - "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things"
“In all things” = “In every way.”
 - C. The incarnation involves the union of the Divine nature and the human nature into the one person, the perfect God-Man. Jesus is fully human and fully divine.
2. I also pointed out last time there are two aspects of Christ's work as our Redeemer. There were two parties to which His work was directed.
 - A. The first is seen in **Verses 14-16**. He came on behalf of His brethren—to become like us and to die for us so that we might be delivered from sin and death. He was made like us so that He could die for us.
 - B. The second party to which Christ's work was directed was God the Father. We see this in the second half of **Verse 17**. He came in service to God, to satisfy God's justice. The author uses the term propitiation.
Hebrews 2:17 NAU - "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."
“Propitiation” from the word ἱλάσκομαι – the word us only used twice.
 - C. We catch a glimpse of the meaning in **Hebrews 5**
Hebrews 9:5 NAU - "and above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον); but of these things we cannot now speak in detail."
The mercy seat was the covering of the Ark of the Covenant where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of the atoning sacrifice. God's justice had to be satisfied. His wrath had to be appeased. Jesus Christ as our high priest made propitiation for the sins of His people, thus accomplishing the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. God's justice had to be satisfied. The just penalty for sin had to be applied so that His wrath could be turned away.

3. Death is the outward display of God's judgment upon sin.
Genesis 2:16-17 NAU - "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
Romans 6:23 NAU - "For the wages of sin is death"
 4. The essence of death involves separation. There were three aspects to the death suffered by Adam upon his breach of God's covenant.
 1. First, he died spiritually. He became corrupt and enslaved by sin. He lost the ability to rightly approach God. Spiritual death describes human separation from God.
Ephesians 2:1-2 NAU - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."
 2. Second, Adam became mortal. Death began to stalk him until his life was lost. Physical death is the separation of the soul or spirit from the body.
Genesis 5:5 NAU - "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."
 In the resurrection the soul will be reunited with the body.
 3. Finally, lost humanity will suffer the curse of hell. The entire human being, body and soul, will be eternally separated from God.
 5. There are several things we can glean about death from this passage.
Hebrews 2:14-15 NAU - "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."
- I. Death is the arch enemy of fallen humanity.
- A. It is described in terms of fear and slavery in **Verse 15**
 1. Paul described death as an enemy in 1 Cor. 15
1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NAU - "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death."
 2. Paul personifies death as a stinging scorpion.
1 Corinthians 15:55-56 NAU - "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;"
 We read of the locusts in Revelation:
Revelation 9:10 NAU - "They have tails like scorpions, and stings"
 3. We need to understand death in the context of sin. Sin puts a sense of terror upon death. Death brings the lost man face to face with the demands of Divine justice. Death puts him face to face with an endless hell.
Hebrews 10:31 NAU - "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 Revelation describes it as the "second death."
Revelation 21:8 NAU - "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

4. Apart from Christ. Apart from the Gospel, death is terrifying.
Hebrews 10:31 NAU - "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
- B. Death was the consequence of Adam's sin.
Romans 5:12 NAU - "just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned"
1. Sin enslaves us. Only in Christ can we find liberty.
Romans 6:6-7 NAU - " knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin."
 2. Death also enslaves us.
Hebrews 2:15 NAU - "and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."
Death has captured every human being. We try to flee.
We try to deny its power. We try to resist its approach, but it's always there. No one is able to be free from its fangs. Its victims are young and old, rich and poor, kings and servants.
 3. Death is a certainty for all
The word died, die, death etc. found over 1200 times in Scripture.
Genesis 3:19 NAU - "By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 NAU - "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven-- ² A time to give birth and a time to die"
- C. We can also see Satan's involvement in the curse of sin.
Hebrews 2:14 NAU - "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,"
1. Satan is said to have power over death because death originated in him. He was the root cause of the sin in the Garden.
 2. Jesus called him a murderer.
John 8:44 NAU - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him."
 3. God ordained Satan as the agent of death upon sinners.
John Owen wrote of Satan: "God hath ordained him to be the *executioner* of the sentence of death upon stubborn sinners unto all eternity. All sinners out of Christ are under the power of Satan. They belong unto that kingdom of death whereof he is the prince and ruler."¹

¹ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 20, Works of John Owen (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 449.

4. His lies in the Garden resulted in the death of all men.
Genesis 3:1-4 NAU - " And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!"
5. Satan's corruption is unredeemable.
Verse 16 draws his discourse on the superiority of Jesus over the angels to a close – It wasn't for the sake of angels that Jesus came but for the sake of His brethren. Satan fell into sin and is forever condemned. He is still following after the corruption of His nature. There is no forgiveness, no transforming grace, no deliverance.

II. Jesus came and laid down His life on behalf of His brethren.

Hebrews 2:14-15 NAU - "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."

A. Jesus conquered death upon the cross.

1. Death is no longer in the hands of Satan but in the hands of Christ.
 Death is no longer our enemy but our friend.
Philippians 1:21 NAU - "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."
2. We will still have to go through death, but we don't have to dread it.
 John Calvin: "Although we must still meet death, let us nevertheless be calm and serene in living and dying, when we have Christ going before us."²
3. In Christ all fear of death is removed.
 Keith and Kristen Getty's lyrics in their song, "In Christ Alone"
*No guilt in life, no fear in death—
 This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
 From life's first cry to final breath,
 Jesus commands my destiny.
 No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
 Can ever pluck me from His hand;
 Till He returns or calls me home—
 Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.*
4. Jesus Christ is Lord over death.
Luke 12:4-5 NAU - "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

² Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 78.

- B. We are the victors.
1. We have overcome death because Jesus has overcome death. We are united to Christ. He took our place. His death has become our death. Death cannot take us from Christ.
Romans 8:35-39 NAU - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 2. Paul tells us death has been swallowed up in victory.
1 Corinthians 15:54 NAU - "But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Conclusion:

1. If you do not know Christ you must consider your soul and eternity with urgency
 - a. Death is approaching quickly and with uncertainty
 Death is almost always most unpredictable. It can come at the most unexpected time – even today.
 - b. As soon as you leave this world you will have to deal with the matter of your sin – you will stand before God condemned.
Hebrews 9:27 NAU - "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,"
2 Corinthians 5:10 NAU - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
2. Christians are graciously united to Christ. He is their elder brother. We need no longer fear death because He has conquered death by His own death.
3. In addition to this, **Verse 18** reminds us that Jesus is always near to aid us. He currently helps us as we suffer under the trials of our present temptations. He knows our trials because He too was tempted.
Hebrews 4:15 NAU - "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin."
 - a. Our Lord's temptation and ours are the same, and yet different.
 Our temptations are from within and without – from the remaining corruption of sin, from our lusts and unbelief as well as from the lies of Satan.
 Our Lord's temptation was from without – from the external temptations of Satan. He had no inclination to sin. He was absolutely free.
 - b. The temptation of Jesus was like unto ours, and yet vastly different. He was our perfect high priest without sin nor inclination to sin.
 - c. Jesus did not participate in our sins or sinful inclinations but He did participate in our humanity in every way and thus He can sympathize with us in our weakness. He knew grief and sorrow, weakness and pain and yet He did not fall under Satan's deceptions.