

# Hebrews 2:1

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] It's possible this morning for you and I to feel beaten down by this unbalanced error. So as we've thought about alternate plans for this Lord's Day, I just want to encourage you by helping us walk the tightrope well.

Again, the tightrope is right. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But if saved, we are going to be pursuing holiness. Our works are going to evidence the fact that we're saved.

Not saved by them, but giving evidence of our salvation. So I err often, acting as if, now that I've been saved, I need to continue to earn that status with God.

And this is not the case. In Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 3, it's prophesied of the Christ. A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.

You may feel like the flame of your faith is barely lit. So be comforted by joining me in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 1.

[1:12] Before I read it, let me remind you as I do each Lord's Day. Beloved, this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. And so we would all do well to listen to it, in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

And it reads, Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. There is one exhortation or encouragement in today's text, and it is the ruling or overarching exhortation of the entire letter of Hebrews.

The original audience of this book is a church of Hellenistic Jewish Christians, or Greek-speaking Jews, that had not seen Jesus, but had heard the gospel and believed.

They had endured much suffering to this point, and the author is anticipating that they will suffer further. So there exists among them the temptation to forsake their faith in Jesus Christ and return to Judaism.

You see, Jews practicing Judaism had long been accepted in the Roman Empire, and this remained true in the days that this letter was written. So there's this very real temptation ahead of them.

[2:28] If we just go back, it's the same God, correct? Like, if we just go back to that, we'll no longer experience this type of persecution. We find in this verse one exhortation accompanied by a warning.

Must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. The exhortation begins with a therefore, And you may be thinking, how is this text meant to encourage me this morning?

Well, here it is. Everything contained within that therefore, which is going to take us back in the book a bit. Therefore refers back to all that the author has said of Jesus Christ in chapter one.

So we're going to look together this morning, especially at Hebrews chapter one, verses two through three. But I'll begin reading in verse one of chapter one. There he says, Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

[3:51] And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Now, he has other things to say about Christ in chapter one. But for our time this morning, I want to think together in these two verses about the supremacy and finality of Jesus Christ.

Kent Hughes, who is a contemporary pastor, wrote of this text, quote, The grand theme of these verses is the supremacy of Christ as God's final word. Christ is held up like a great jewel to the sunlight of God's revelation.

And as the light courses through it, seven facets flash with gleaming brilliance. I had a conversation this past week with a brother, a member of our church, about people who always want to go deeper past the gospel.

They want to go deeper. And we were just musing first about what that term even means sometimes. We're not really sure what's being asked in that case. But also about how people want to want to go past the gospel as if it's the simple thing about the Christian faith.

[5:03] And they want to go mine the depths as if there's anything deeper than God's love shown to sinners in a personal work of Jesus Christ. And so you see here Christ's supremacy and finality refracted for us to consider.

We get to roll it around, which is the great work, the great theological effort of every faithful Christian mind. So let's give these seven refractions some titles to help us in our study of them. First, Christ is the inheritor. Second, the creator. Third, the sustainer. Fourth, the radiator. Fifth, the representer.

Sixth, the purifier. And seventh, the ruler. First, Christ is inheritor. We see at the last part of verse 2, Whom he appointed the heir of all things.

It follows that because Jesus is the Son of God, then he is also the heir of God. The writer of Hebrews identifies for us Jesus Christ as the anointed and son of Psalm 2 when he cites Psalm 2, verse 7 in Hebrews 1, verse 5.

[6:24] There he writes, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. In Psalm 2, verse 8, the psalmist writes, Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

So Psalm 2 teaches us that the inheritance of Jesus Christ is the earth and its peoples. But also Colossians 1, verse 6 teaches us that all things, so the cosmos themselves, everything in the universe were created for him.

But not only that, beloved, if you are in Christ Jesus, then you, specifically you, are his inheritance. Through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross, he has purchased you and he treasures you as his inheritance.

In Ephesians chapter 1, in verse 18, Paul tells the Ephesian believers that he always prays that they may know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

What an astounding truth. Christ is inheritor and we are part of that inheritance. But not only are we Christ's inheritance, we are also his co-heirs.

[7:42] In Romans 8 and verse 17, Paul calls us heirs. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. Christ is the heir of all things.

He is the heir of God. But as followers of Christ, we are found in him. So we are also heirs. What a thing to think about.

What a thing to fully realize and understand. Someday, come Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 21 and following. Paul writes, What an amazing thing to be said of us who have Christ only by grace through faith in him.

Secondly, we see that Christ is creator. Verse 2 again, Through whom also he created the world. Not only does Christ inherit all things, but he also created all things. The Greek word here translated world could be more literally translated ages.

[9:04] It's a wonderful word because it includes all things. Not only space, but also time. Brooke Voss Westcott, a 19th century British theologian, defines this Greek word, which I'm intentionally not trying to pronounce for you, this way.

The sum of the periods of time, including all that has manifested in and through them, an order which exists through time developed in successive stages.

Everything. All of it was made by Christ. Our galaxy is an average sized spiral galaxy over 100,000 light years across.

600 trillion miles. That is not a number we can even fathom. Our medium sized average spiral galaxy, 600 trillion miles across.

We can see with modern telescopes about 100,000 million galaxies. Each galaxy contains 100,000 million stars.

[10:17] The average distance between these galaxies is 3 million light years. It's just absolutely astounding. In this scientific age, I will just say, matter of factly, we ought to have more reason to believe in a creator God than people did in the past.

What an astounding thing this universe is. And it was created by and for Christ. John chapter 1 verse 3.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 1 Corinthians 8 and verse 6. Yet for us there is one God the Father, for whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Colossians chapter 1 and verse 16. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

And Romans 11 and verse 36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. The cosmos were created that we might praise Christ.

[11:36] We are a new creation, right? Found in him for the praise of Christ. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. So Christ is creator.

The creator of all things. The creator of us and the new us. That we might worship him. Thirdly, Christ is sustainer.

Verse 3 says, He upholds the universe by the word of his power. Jesus Christ created all things and he sustains all things.

He is not now passive once having created. He actively sustains by the word of his power. This means that Jesus says to the world, Move like this.

[12:37] Behave like that. Rain here. Snow there. Weirdly mixed. Rain and snow into terrible ice. Here. Just a little aside.

I was just so anticipating the worst ice storm. It just seemed like the recipe for that was going to happen. This is totally off topic. But this is another God's providence to us. The place that we're currently living while we're working on this house, there's a tree that really needs to come down. And one way felling it would hit the edge of a roof. The other way felling it would hit a power line. And I've been anticipating having to climb halfway up this tree and top it and then bring it down the rest of the way.

Well, the only tree that snapped in the yard was that tree in half, right where I would have cut it, landed it on the ground, and now I just get to go out there and take care of it. So wonderful. Right? Jesus said that tree should snap right there in the middle and I can just take care of it very safely now.

Right? Whatever he says, right, the world obeys. He's absolutely sovereign over everything that happens. This means that nothing will cease to do exactly as it is told until Jesus says to do otherwise.

[13:51] Right? If he says go to the world, it goes until he says stop. Jonathan Edwards, who is the most brilliant theological mind this country has ever produced, and some, even secular people, argue that he's the most brilliant mind we've ever produced of any variety in the States.

He had this theory of continuous creation, that is, that Jesus is constantly speaking the world into existence. And it's really fascinating, and I want to read you a couple quick quotes from him, just to marvel, to think for a moment about how it is that all of it is sustained by Christ.

He says this, quote, It is plain. Nothing can exert itself or operate when and where it is not existing, because what is past entirely ceases when present exists in the moment that had ceased 20 years ago.

Which is to say, my previous self has no power over my present self because my previous self stopped existing when the past went past. The past does not have the power to sustain that which is in the present or in the future.

It can't do it. I can't make the future me exist. He goes on. God's upholding created substance or causing its existence in each successive moment is altogether equivalent to an immediate production out of nothing.

[15:15] At each moment, because its existence at this moment is not merely in part from God, but wholly from him, and not in any part or degree from its antecedent existence. That is to say, right, I have no power to sustain my future existence, which means God must do it.

Right? He is constantly creating Nathan Rayner. I keep being created in the future. And if your brain is breaking over that thing, join the party.

Edwards was brilliant. But the point is that we should marvel. Right? That we are together the way it holds together. And I know that there's science about covalent bonds and things of that nature, but all of that happens because Christ said it should happen.

Right? He says, exist like this. And until he says stop, right, it will continue to be like that. If Jesus Christ has the power to sustain the world, then he most certainly has the power to sustain our faith. This is why Paul was able to say with such confidence to the Philippian believers in Philippians 1 and verse 6, I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ, creator and sustainer.

[16:28] Fourth, Christ is radiator. Verse 3 says he is the radiance of the glory of God. Radiance here, I think, is a better translation than the oft-used reflection.

The moon reflects the light of the sun. The sun radiates that light. Jesus is not glory. He's the radiance that comes off of God's glory.

John chapter 1 verse 18 says, No one has ever seen God, the only God, referring to Christ, who is at the Father's side. He, Christ, has made him known.

We get to see God in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. The Nicene Creed, which was made in 325 A.D., says we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made of the same essence as the Father.

Jesus is God. So when we see Jesus, we see God. We have to behold him in the Scripture. That's a significant thing that we are able to do.

[17:52] Colossians chapter 1 verse 15, Paul there says, He, Christ, is the image. Fifthly, Christ is representer. Verse 3 says he's the exact imprint of his nature.

This phrase balances out the previous phrase. Jesus as God's radiance speaks to his oneness with the Father. Jesus as God's representer or imprint speaks to his distinctness as the Son.

So the author of Hebrews gives us a taste of the mystery that is the Trinitarian nature of God and the hypostatic union of Christ.

Truly God and truly man. Beloved, this should move us to odd speculation. A God who is one, but three in one. An incarnate God.

A mystery that I look forward to having unraveled in glory. Just what an incredible thing, this nature of our God.

[18:51] Exact imprint refers to the image on a coin made by a die. Once again, when we see Jesus, we see God. We know how he thinks.

We know how he speaks. We know how he feels. We know how he relates to mankind. God has spoken to us in his Son.

I said to you, my intention was to be an encouragement to you this morning. All these things about who Christ is and who we are in him. Let me just be more pointed for a moment.

Again, we know how he relates to mankind. God has spoken to us in his Son. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 11, verse 28 and 29.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[19:53] Christ is a representer. Christ is a purifier. Christ is a purifier, verse 3 says, after making purification for sins.

Jesus Christ is the supreme priest. He was the agent of the purification for our sins and the sacrifice necessary for that purification.

He fulfills all that's necessary. He is the supreme priest and the final priest. The author of Hebrews will go on to expand on both realities in his letter later in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 11 and following.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemy should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Right? Justification and sanctification carried together there.

[21:05] In John chapter 19 and verse 30, Christ hangs on the cross and just before he gives his final breath, he says, It is finished.

Everything necessary for our salvation. That the beginning, the intermediate part, and the end was accomplished by Christ on the cross.

Done. Once for all. Accomplished. Romans 6.10 says, For the death he died, he died to sin once for all.

But the life he lives, he lives to God. So Christ is our purifier. Not works done by us to purify us, but Christ himself. Seventh gives us the purification for sins.

Seventh, Christ is ruler. It says he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Jesus Christ does not have to work as the Levitical priests works.

[22:03] They never sat. They were continually making sacrifice for the sins of Israel. The writer of Hebrews' words are astonishing here. Don't let it be lost on you.

His original listeners would have taken such courage from this phrase. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Not only is he seated, but his location is significant.

His session is at the right hand of God the Father. They would have remembered that Jesus' sacrificial work is final. Paul wrote in Romans 3, verse 21 and 22, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. It's so significant that Jesus is at the right hand of the majesty on high.

The right hand was the place of highest honor and power in the court of a king. In Ephesians 4, in verse 10, there Paul says, In Jesus' session or his reign, Paul tells us something that he is doing specifically for those who believe in him.

[23:30] In Romans chapter 8, verse 31 and following, Just after a grand explanation of God's elective purpose, Paul writes, He sits at the right hand of the Father, He lays claim over his people, and he prays on our behalf.

So Christ is the inheritor, the creator, the sustainer, the radiator, the representer, the purifier, and the ruler. And all of that is packed into the therefore of Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 1.

Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. Because of Jesus' supremacy and finality, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard.

The author of Hebrews is referring to all they knew of Jesus, his person and his work. Which she refers back to in the therefore of 2.1.

And forward to, in 2.3, as such a great salvation. Pay attention. It's a present verb tense, which means that the author does not have in mind the completion of the task in any given amount of time.

[25:12] This suggests that one can pay attention, but that we must all continue paying attention. You could translate it, pay attention, pay attention, pay attention.

The work of paying much closer attention is not a work that will be completed on this side of glory. Note with me the emphasis.

Not pay much closer attention to yourself. Our faith cannot be sustained if the focus of it is on ourselves.

Our faith is sustained by focusing on what we have heard. All that is true of Jesus Christ, his person and his work.

Saving and sustaining faith must find its focus on Christ. He is the object of that faith. So we're given this encouragement to pay much closer attention.

[26:12] But it is also, I told you, accompanied by a warning. Lest we drift away from it. The picture the author is painting here is of a ship safe at harbor.

Not having its anchor properly set, slowly moving out toward the danger of the sea. The sea is often portrayed in the Bible as a place of tumult and of danger, unknown things.

The ship, of interesting note, was a common early symbol of the church. In 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter makes a connection between Noah and his family being carried safely through the flood and the church being in Jesus Christ.

In 1 Peter chapter 4, Jesus calms the storm on a sea, showing that he has power even over something felt as so unknown and evil.

When the symbol of the cross had to be hidden, it could be easily disguised in the mast of a ship. Brothers and sisters, this picture of drifting is meant to elicit imagery of subtle movement.

[27:24] Little by little. Don't drift away. Pay much closer attention. Because this drifting is a movement toward danger made by degrees and increments at a time.

Later in Hebrews, the author writes, chapter 6, verse 19 and following, We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. Pay much closer attention, lest we drift away from it.

In Hebrews 6, verse 7 through 12, having just spoken of the apostate, the author of Hebrews uses a different metaphor.

There he says, For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned, lest we drift away from what we have heard.

[28:41] Paul speaks of the same concern in his first letter to Timothy. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 19 and 20, Paul makes mention of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who made shipwreck of their faith by rejecting faith and a good conscience.

And then in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 20 and 21, he writes, O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. So we go back to Hebrews 6 and verse 9. Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation.

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises, sanctification that accompanies our justification.

So how do we ensure that we are not drifters? We pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

[30:04] We love the person and work of Jesus Christ. Somebody has doubt of whether or not they are in Christ. A fair question to ask is, do you find that you love him?

Are you affectionate toward Christ, his person and his work? And then do you find that producing in you a desire to serve him?

You will serve what you love. You will find that you will be inclined toward the ways of Christ if you love him.

Set your gaze on him. Recognize that all the promises of God are confirmed in his completed work. His work as inheritor, creator, sustainer, radiator, representer, purifier, and ruler.

In closing, I'd like to read to you a prayer from the Valley of Vision, which is a collection of Puritan prayers. I hope you're familiar with this work.

[31:07] Note in this little prayer his great humility, his self-awareness of how frail he is, the attitude of his heart, which I will assume led him to pay much closer attention.

He prays this. May I live by you, live for you, never be satisfied with my Christian progress, but as I resemble Christ.

And may conformity to his principles, temper, and conduct grow hourly in my life. Let your unexampled love constrain me into holy obedience and render my duty my delight.

If others deem my hope delusion, my meekness infirmity, my zeal madness, my hope delusion, my actions hypocrisy, may I rejoice to suffer for your name.

Keep me walking steadfastly towards the country of everlasting delights, that paradise land which is my true inheritance. Support me by the strength of heaven that I may never turn back or desire false pleasures that will disappear into nothing.

[32:38] As I pursue my heavenly journey by your grace, let me be known as a man with no aim but that of a burning desire for you and the good and salvation of my fellow men.

Let's pray together. Thank you.