

# Hebrews 2:1

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[0:00] Well, we have been preaching verse by verse through the book of Romans, and we have spent the past two weeks in chapter 6 thinking about what it means to be set free from sin.

I have been attempting to help you see the tightrope we walk as Christians, knowing that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone and the personal work of Jesus Christ alone, but also knowing that if we have been saved, set free from the power of sin, given a new nature, then our faith will be a faith that works in the pursuit of holiness.

I do not think that I have done a good job of helping the church see this careful tension over the past decade and a half. It seems to me that I have overemphasized sanctification as evidence of justification.

Not an untruth, but perhaps a truth with too much emphasis. I want you to know that this comes from a desire for you to persevere, but the imbalance comes from a reaction to the cheap grace preaching of our day.

Perhaps you remember me recently reading from John MacArthur's commentary. There he wrote, Perhaps the most common reason why Christians find it hard to believe they are freed from sin's tyranny while they are still on earth, is that their continued battle with sin seems almost constantly to contradict that truth.

[1:39] If they have a new holy disposition and sin's control has truly been broken, they wonder, why are they still so strongly tempted, and why do they so often succumb?

So this morning, I want to step away from Romans 6 before we complete it, Lord willing, next week, and I just want to encourage you.

The planned text for today, sufficient for the task. Verses 15 through 23. It can be accomplished there, but not the way I wrote it this week.

So I'd like to labor with it a bit more that we might get that balance correct in that text. In Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 3, it is prophesied of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. And I think that most people in our church are like me, are hard on themselves.

[2:53] I am my own worst critic. I don't think Satan has any concern with being an accuser to me, because I take care of it all on my own. I think perhaps because we're a church that takes the Bible seriously, because we care about holiness, perhaps because people can tend to be attracted to the preaching of someone who feels the way they feel.

We're kind of alike in this way. So, this morning you may feel beaten down. You may feel like the flame of your faith is just barely lit.

You are in good company. I often feel this way. Many of us do. In fact, as I just searched, kind of thinking towards the end of this week, perhaps not the way I wrote Romans 6, 15 through 23.

This text that were coming to my mind, things that we had preached on before, I thought, oh, that's a good, encouraging text to this point. And I would go and I would read those sermons and go, whew, that was really hard on us in that particular passage.

And so I just want to be an encouragement to us today. I want to prod at us, help us to consider the completed work of Christ on our behalf. And we're going to do that by looking at Hebrews chapter 2, verse 1.

[4:25] Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

And so we would do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises. Let me emphasize that part of this thing I say when I preach. Believe its promises and obey its commands.

Hebrews 2 and verse 1. 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 to the Hebrew people.

The original audience for Hebrews is a church of Hellenistic Jews, think Greek-speaking Jews, that had not seen Jesus, but they had heard the gospel and believed.

[5:36] Most likely a small church meeting on the outskirts of Rome. 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. Jews practicing Judaism had long been accepted in the Roman Empire, and this remained true in the days that this letter was written.

So they're being tugged at. Perhaps we can still worship God in that way, this way that won't cost us our possessions and our comfort and our lives.

And apostasy had already happened in the life of the church, so there's lots of warning in this letter. And we find that there's an accompanying warning in this verse.

And we're not going to neglect it altogether, but we're going to focus our energy together on the exhortation from the letter. Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard.

[6:46] The exhortation begins with a therefore, and as you may be thinking, how is this text meant to encourage me this morning? Well, here it is. Everything contained within that therefore.

That is what is meant to be an encouragement to you today. The therefore refers back to all that the author has said of Jesus Christ in chapter 1.

Now, we don't have time this morning to unpack all of chapter 1. Perhaps we could fly over it, but I think that would be unfair to you. So we're just going to look at two verses from chapter 1.

Hebrews chapter 1, verse 2 and verse 3. So let me read verse 1 just to get us into verse 2 and 3. 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.

[8:00] 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.

Behold, in these two verses, the supremacy and the finality of Jesus Christ. Kent Hughes, a contemporary pastor, in his commentary on this text, said, 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.

Christ's supremacy and His finality is refracted for us to consider. This is the encouragement this morning, who Christ is and what He's accomplished.

So let's give these seven refractions, titles, to help us in our study. Christ is, so this is an outline if you care for it. I'll repeat these.

[9:15] But Christ is an inheritor, a creator, a sustainer, a radiator, a representor, a purifier, and a ruler.

So first, Christ is an inheritor. We see in verse 2, whom He, God, 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 2-7 in chapter 1 and verse 5.

You are my Son. Today I have begotten you. He's referring to Psalm 2. In Psalm 2 and verse 8, the psalmist writes, Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

Referring to this anointed one. So Psalm 2 teaches us that the inheritance of Jesus Christ is the earth and its peoples. But Colossians chapter 1 and verse 6 teaches us that all things, so the very

cosmos themselves, were created for Him.

[10:33] Him. But not only that, beloved, if you are in Christ Jesus, then you, specifically you, are His inheritance.

You belong to Him. 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 and 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. But not only are we Christ's inheritance, we are also His co-heirs. Heirs.

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. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 21 and following says, So let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

[12:01] We are heirs with Christ. Secondly, Christ is creator. Verse 2 says that God created the world through Him.

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.

And it is a wonderful word because it includes all things. Not only space, but also time. Brooke Westcott, who was a 19th century British theologian, defines this Greek word in this way.

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

Everything, all of it, forever, was created by Christ. Our galaxy is an average-sized spiral galaxy.

[13:11] Those of you who know me know I like this kind of stuff. It's over 100,000 light years across, which is 600 trillion miles.

I dare you to comprehend a number like that. 600 trillion miles across our galaxy. We can see with modern telescopes about 100,000 million galaxies.

Each galaxy contains 100,000 million stars. The average distance between these galaxies is 3 million light years.

This is astounding. The universe is absolutely astounded. And it was created by and for Christ. John 1 and 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, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

[14:21] 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.

Amen. The cosmos were created that we might praise Christ. And we are a new creation, beloved, for the praise of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold, it's passed away. Behold, the new has come.

Christ is the creator of all things, including us. A powerful word has spoken all things for the praise of God into existence.

[15:28] Not only is Christ the creator, He's also the sustainer. Verse 3 tells us that He upholds the universe by the word of His power.

Jesus Christ created all things. And sustains them, keeps them going. He actively sustains by the word of His power.

That means that Jesus says to the world, move like this. Behave like that. Rain here, snow there, and the world obeys.

This means that nothing will cease to do exactly as it is told until Jesus says to do otherwise. I think that's very cool. Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest minds that this country has ever produced, much less greatest theological minds, he's often given credit for being just one of the greatest minds, believed in something that he called continuous creation.

And that was to say that he thought that the world was being created moment by moment, spoken into existence moment by moment. And to be frank, this makes my head explode because I am no Jonathan Edwards, in case you were unclear about that.

[16:47] But just listen to what he says. It's just fascinating. So, 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 existence begins.

It does no more coexist with it than it does any other moment that had ceased 20 years ago. Here's my dumb summary of that. The past does not have the power to sustain that which is in the present or in the future.

I believe that's what he just said. But he goes on. Here's the part I want to get you to. Quote, God's upholding created substance or causing its existence in each successive moment is altogether equivalent to an immediate production out of nothing 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.

He's saying the past ceased to exist in the past, so the present must exist by the power of God.

Now, you could rewind this idea of continuous creation and hear that whatever he's saying is that Christ, by the word of his power, holds us together.

Have you ever really considered what it is that keeps us together? Why is it that our atoms exist the way our atoms exist and that those atoms exist together?

[18:16] There are scientific explanations for this. I understand. But I just want to posit to you that if Christ would cease holding us together by the word of his power, what makes us up would just fly off into oblivion.

In a moment, it would all be gone. Christ is the sustainer. If Jesus Christ has the power to sustain the universe, the cosmos, then, beloved, he has the power to sustain our faith.

As feeble as it can be at times, he can hold that together. This is why Paul was able to say with such confidence to the Philippian believers in Philippians 1-6, I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ.

Christ is the sustainer. Notice fourthly that Christ is the radiator. We see in verse 3, he's the radiance of the glory of God.

Radiance here is a better translation than the oft-used reflection. Maybe your translation this morning says reflection. The moon reflects the light of the sun.

[19:38] The sun, though, radiates that light. Jesus does not merely reflect God's glory, he is part and parcel of God's glory. He is part of the source of that glory.

John writes in John 1 and verse 18, no one has ever seen God, the only God, referring to Jesus, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

The Nicene Creed, 325 A.D., an important confession, states, 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.

And this is what the biblical evidence bears out, including Hebrews 1 and verse 3. Jesus is God, so when we see Jesus, we see God.

And this is an astounding reality for us living in the New Testament era. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 15 says, Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

[21:02] Christ is the radiator. Christ is also the representer. Verse 3 says, he's the exact imprint of God's nature, of his nature.

Now 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. Many people have attempted to give some analogy for this and they all fail miserably, which is why I never try.

Beloved, this reality of the triune nature of God should move us to odd speculation. A God who is one but three in one.

A mystery that I look forward to having unraveled in glory. I often joke, you may know, that I feel like there's going to be a frequently asked questions video when we arrive in that day.

[22:09] They're just going to be like, hey, wait, wait, wait, hold the questions. An old VHS will be popped in to help us understand these types of glorious truths. But I don't know that we're going to fully comprehend this one ever.

It's possible that we may explore the glory of this God one but three in one forever. We might constantly be becoming new revelation, awe and wonder and worship for eternity.

Now, exact imprint refers to the image on a coin made by a die. So a stamp, an exact imprint. 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 broadly.

We know how He relates to us as His people. God has spoken to us in His Son. And listen to what Jesus says.

[23:20] There's one thing from 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. So Jesus, as the representer of God, we do have the confidence that when He speaks, He speaks to us from Him, and that we can find rest for our souls in Christ, the representer. Sixth, Christ is the purifier. Once again, 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 is the supreme priest and the final priest.

We no longer have a need for sacrifice, and we no longer have a need for a priest to offer that sacrifice on our behalf. That's why in this church, you will never hear an altar call, because we do not have altars in a New Testament church.

[24:50] Christ died once for all. The sacrifice has been made. Maybe someone will ask you to come to the stage, but there is no altar here, and there is no priest except for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews will go on to expand on both of these realities, that he is the sacrifice, and he is the great high priest. In his letter in Hebrews chapter 10, listen to verse 11 and following.

There he writes, and every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. They're always meant to point us to a greater sacrifice than is Christ.

Verse 12, but when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Sat down, so significant, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

[26:00] By that single offering, he guaranteed the purchase of his church and their perfection through time. He guaranteed the thing would be accomplished that is now being accomplished.

John chapter 19 and verse 30, Christ said, it is finished. And he bowed his head and he gave up his spirit.

Romans chapter 6 and verse 10, for the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God.

He has completed it. He is the purifier. It is an accomplished work. And seventh, Christ is the ruler. He sat down, verse 3 says, at the right hand of the majesty on high. Jesus Christ does not have to work as the Levitical priests work. They never sat.

[27:05] The temple, the tabernacle preceding it, had lots of furniture in it, with lots of purposes, not a single place to sit down. They never, they were always, when they were on their shift, continually making sacrifice for the sins of Israel.

Meant to teach us something, there is a greater sacrifice, one who will come. The writer of Hebrews' words are astonishing here. Don't let this be lost on you.

The original hearers of this letter would have taken such courage from this phrase, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

They would have remembered that Jesus' sacrificial work is finished, completed. Romans chapter three, 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 believed. It is of great significance that Jesus is at the right hand of the majesty on high.

[28:17] Having completed that work, the right hand historically was the place of highest honor power and power. Second only to the king was the one that sat at the right hand of the king.

Ephesians 4, verse 10, he who descended, being Christ, is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.

Where Jesus is now, bodily, is in what is called his session, his reign over all things. Paul tells us this session means something for us.

He's doing something specific for those who believe in him. He's carrying out a specific task.

Romans chapter 8, verse 31 and following, just after a grand explanation of God's elective purpose, calling together a people for his possession, says, what then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[29:40] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? God. It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who was at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

He's making a case for us to God. He sees you in him and he says mine to God. He belongs to me. She belongs to me. Regardless of their performance, but because of mine, they are ours. So Christ is the inheritor, the creator, the sustainer, the radiator, the representer, the purifier, and the ruler.

And that's what's contained, at least that is what's contained in the word therefore in Hebrews 2 and verse 1. But let's look at the rest of the verse.

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

[30:56] The author of Hebrews is referring to all they knew of Jesus, his person, and his work, which he's referring back to in this therefore of verse 2 and 1.

and then he refers forward to it in chapter 2 and verse 3 as such a great salvation. We're to pay much closer attention.

The Hebrew verb pay attention is in the present tense, which means that the author does not have in mind the completion of the task in any given amount of time.

This suggests that one can pay attention, but that we must all continue paying attention. The work of paying much closer attention is not a work that will be completed.

We're to pay much closer attention and pay much closer attention and pay much closer attention. But note with me the emphasis. Not pay much closer attention to yourself.

[32:03] your successes or your failures. Our faith cannot be sustained if the focus of it is on ourselves. Our faith is sustained by focusing on what we have heard.

Saving and sustaining faith must find its focus on Christ. Just pay attention to what the author of Hebrews is saying here. Remember a people who are being tempted to apostatize, to walk away from the faith.

Different than we may be feeling beat down, but they were feeling beat down by being followers of Christ. And he says to them, therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.

Turn your focus on Christ so that you will not drift. And we don't want to ignore that warning. We're just going to minimize it a bit this morning.

But there is a warning there that accompanies this exhortation 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, imperceptibly being drug in that direction.

[33:27] Now the ship was a common early symbol of the church. You can see some examples of this. 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.

Mark chapter 4 Jesus calms a storm, a little tossed ship on a troubled sea. When the symbol of the cross had to be hidden, it could be easily disguised in the mast of a ship.

And this constantly happened. They put crosses in those masts of the ship. Brothers and sisters, this picture of drifting is meant to elicit imagery of subtle movement, of movement toward danger made by degrees and increments at a time.

And so, we must pay much closer attention and continue doing it lest we drift from it. later in Hebrews, the author writes in chapter 6 and verse 19 and following, we have this as a sure and steady 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.

So notice again that language. He's trying to draw us to this careful consideration, this closer attention to Christ himself, his person and his work.

[34:57] Him being the anchor because we don't want to drift from him. In Hebrews 6, verse 7 and following, having just spoken of the apostate, the author of Hebrews uses a different metaphor.

Here he says, for land that has drunk of the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those who forsake it as 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.

There's the drifting taking place there. Let us be careful lest we drift. Paul speaks of the same concern in his first letter to Timothy.

Chapter 1 and verse 19, 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 verse 20 and 21 he says, O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

[36:06] For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith. Back to Hebrews 6 verse 9, though we speak in this way of this good cultivated soil and this thorn producing soil, he says there, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation.

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

Love the person and work of Jesus Christ. You will serve what you love. Set your gaze on him. Recognize that all the promises of God are confirmed in his completed work. Consider it and consider it and consider it and surround yourself with people who are doing the same and will help you do this.

People who will speak the truth to you when you most desperately need to hear it. Christ is the inheritor, the creator, the sustainer, the radiator, the purifier, and the ruler.

[37:26] In closing, I would like to read to you a prayer from the Valley of Vision, which is a collection of Puritan prayers. And I want you just to note the great humility and self-awareness and recognition of frailty of this author.

The attitude of his heart, which I will assume led him to pay much closer attention. This is the prayer. You are the blessed God, happy in yourself, source of happiness in your creatures, my maker, benefactor, proprietor, upholder.

You have produced and sustained me, supported and indulged me, saved and kept me. you are in every situation able to meet my needs and miseries.

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 faith folly, my meekness infirmity, my zeal madness, my hope delusion, my actions hypocrisy, may I rejoice to suffer for your name.

[38:55] 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.

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 close in prayer.