

## *Jesus — Founder of Salvation*

**Preached by Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson on January 27, 2013**

**TEXT: Hebrews 2:5-18**

**Link: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=128138597>**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Our Heavenly Father, we praise you, that you have exalted our Lord Jesus Christ at your right hand. And we thank you that he has sent His Holy Spirit, to bear witness to our Savior in and through the written word. We thank you for his ministry of illuminating our minds and drawing our hearts to you. And teaching us as though the Lord Jesus Himself were beside us sitting near us in the pew and opening up his word to us. We pray that you would grant us that mercy today. That these may be moments not merely of the teaching of words, but the unfolding of your words, into our hearts. And we pray that in your light, we may see light, and that by your word, we may be led to Christ, the incarnate Word. And by him through the power of the Spirit, to know and trust and love and serve you in delight, as our Heavenly Father. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen. Please be seated.

### **SCRIPTURE READING:**

Now, as we continue these Sunday mornings reading in the Letter to the Hebrews, we turn this morning to Hebrews chapter two. We're going to read verses five through 18. Hebrews chapter two. And you'll find the passages in the pew Bible, page 1001. And you should find a copy of that in the pew rack in front of you, or perhaps in the pew beside you. And for our children who brought their children's Bible, the reading is on page 1491. Page 1001, or in the Children's Bible 1491. Let us hear God's word. Hebrews chapter two, and from verse five.

*For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, (and he's referring to the eighth Psalm), "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under His feet." Now, in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, "we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower*

*than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 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. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, (and now we have quotations from the psalter, and from the prophecy of Isaiah), "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, (he puts these words into Jesus mouth), "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." 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, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subjected to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 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. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

## **SERMON:**

One of the most dramatic moments, I think, in the ministry of our Lord Jesus is the occasion, when you remember, he walked across the water to the disciples, and encouraged Peter to step out of his boat, and in turn to walk towards Jesus. And we are told there in Matthew chapter 14, that as Peter did that, his eyes were diverted from Jesus, and focused on the winds, the storm, the waves. And he began to sink. It's a very obvious lesson that we repeat frequently to ourselves, isn't it? That in the Christian life, the most fundamental principle is, you need to keep your eyes on Jesus, or the Christian life, never mind, life in general, will sink you. And although this letter to the Hebrews often uses language from the Old Testament, that may be alien to us in the 21st century. And although certainly the reasoning of it, for example, in this passage is extremely tight and wonderfully logical, its basic message is actually quite simple. It is, make sure your eyes, the eyes of faith, are resolutely fixed on the Lord Jesus. That is the way to live the Christian life. And it is especially the way to live the Christian life if your boat is liable to sink in the storm. As was true of the Christians who first received this letter. He tells us later in chapter 10, that they had experienced the spoiling of their goods. They had lost everything financially. Becoming a Christian had bankrupted them. That was what actually had happened to them. And at the same time, they were suffering persecution. There's a reference to a famous Christian being released from jail at the end of the letter. And in addition, they'd lost their church. They were now meeting in one another's front rooms probably. Or perhaps some dingy hired hall. And all that they used to enjoy -- looking to the great temple and its

liturgy, it was all gone from them. And if we know our own hearts, we, I think can understand why it is that the author writes to them because they are tempted to look back. They're tempted to give up. And so he says, we will come to this God willing, next week in chapter three, verse one, "considered Jesus." And in more famous verses towards the end in chapter 12, verses one and two, "as we run this race, with perseverance, let us do so looking to Jesus."

But here's the issue. We can't look to Jesus successfully, if we don't know very much about Jesus. And it's certainly one of the tragic paradoxes of our own time, that many of us feel very deeply, that we actually don't know Jesus nearly well enough to be able to consider him. We know all kinds of things well enough. We know baseball statistics. We know so much about the Gamecocks, or about houses or about computers, or about whatever our profession is. And so we can spend a great deal of time considering these things.

But the truth is, most of us seem to find it actually quite a stretch to consider Jesus for any length of time, actually. And part of the reason may be, we don't know what to consider. Jesus is a kind of amorphous person -- out there. And so as this writer is about to exhort us, "consider Jesus", as he's told us in the opening four verses, the revelation God has given in Jesus is far superior to everything that's in the Old Testament put together. The glory of the Lord Jesus is vastly superior to the glory of angels. They are messengers; He is God's Son. Which he had begun to expound in chapter one, verse five through to chapter two, verse four. And as he leads up to encouraging us to consider Jesus, He gives us in these verses, no less than five cardinal reasons why Jesus should thus be considered. Now five is a stretch beyond the usual, I think. And for some of us, it's a stretch beyond our short term memory. But God in His providence has left space in the order of service today, and there may be a pencil in the pure rack in front of you. And so if your short term memory goes to three points, it's important that you at least note down the points. And I will be looking here mentally chatting, the people whose short term memory goes to five points. And I will, of course, question you, on the way out as you leave this morning. Which should lessen the cloud at the front door.

Now, what is it that he wants us to see? First of all, in verses five through nine. He wants us to see that Jesus is the great King who is exalted in glory. Now, you'd have noticed in our reading, the reference the quotation from the eighth Psalm. And he's obviously meditating on Psalm eight. And the interesting thing is Psalm it is actually a meditation on Genesis one verses 26 to 28, in which God we are told, "made man has his image and gave us dominion over everything." And he's, he's thinking about this dominion. But then he says, a very striking and strange thing. He says, you notice in verse nine, that Jesus, God's son, "was made lower than the angels". Lower than the angels? Now, why is that so strange? Because he's just told us is far greater than the angels. So he's, he's, he's, he's pulling our thinking out. He's, he's making us ask the question, how is it that the one who is greater than the angels can possibly

be lower than the angels? And the answer to that question, as is written all over the Scriptures about our Lord Jesus, is that for the Lord Jesus, the way up, was the way down. The way to his exaltation, Dr. Thomas reflected on this in our pastoral prayer today. The way to the throne of God and to the exaltation of the one who has the name that is above every name, at which name, every knee will bow in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord. That is because although he was in the form of God, and counting himself equal with God was not robbery for him. He made Himself nothing. He took on our human nature, he took on the servants form. He was obedient unto death, he even went to the humiliation of the death of the cross. And that is why because he has done this for me, because he has done this for us, God has highly exalted Him. It's the pattern you see again and again and again in the pages of the scriptures, that in order to do what that first man failed to do... That first man was made out of the dust of the earth, to have dominion over all creation, but instead in his sin, becomes part of the dust of the earth. The animals over which he was to rule now come and walk over his dust. Our Lord Jesus Christ as a second Adam has come to bear the judgment of God upon that sin and our sin following. To rise triumphant from the grave to be exalted at the right hand of our Heavenly Father. He is exalted precisely because he was so humiliated. And if you are to see him, he says, in your humiliation, these people were being humiliated as Christians, then fix your eye on Jesus as the King exalted in glory.

But then secondly, as he goes on in verses 10 and 11, you'll notice this, he tells us Jesus is not only the King exalted in glory, but he is salvation's founder, who has come to share our humanity. And look at what he says. He says in verse 10, "It was fitting, that God" he's speaking about the Father, "for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing us to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." Now, you see what he's saying here. He is saying Jesus has come to be, what he calls in the English Standard Version, the translation is, "the founder of our salvation." If you've got the New International Version it's "author", if you've got the King James version, which actually I think it's the best of these three, here, it is Captain. "The captain of our salvation." The idea is, and it's used only two or three times in the New Testament is, somebody who alone does something and by doing it, because he alone can do it and does do it, it's possible for him to draw others into sharing what he has accomplished.

You might think of this, you can think of this actually as perhaps the, perhaps the commander of some group of seals. I mean, in the military sense. In some dangerous expedition, having to break through enemy lines, in order perhaps, to rescue someone. And their commander first breaks through himself and opens a way. And the whole group are able to follow or some military officer perhaps in the Korean War, in the Korean jungle, and they're seeking to get within an hour of some particular place, and they come to a ravine and there's no possibility of them getting there, unless somehow they can get across the ravine. And it just so happens that he is an Olympic long jump champion, and he gets a rope and he leaps across the ravine. And

by doing so, he makes it possible for his fellows to come with him. And this is what Jesus has done. This is why he came and shared our human nature because he had to enter enemy occupied territory of sin and death, and a world under the wrath and judgment of God. A world of shame and guilt. And by his death for our sins, and His resurrection, triumph, he breaks the neck of our enemies of sin and death. He exhausts in Himself, the Holy judgment of God, and because of what he has done has become the captain, the pioneer, of our salvation. And now by His grace He leads us through into the very presence of God. A King exalted in glory. A founder, a captain who shares our humanity.

And thirdly, in these verses something that we alluded to a good deal here and our ministers mention it frequently, Jesus is also, thirdly, our worship leader in his people's liturgy. That is what he goes on to say. Because he has done this he's not ashamed to call us brothers, saying, and he has these marvelous quotations from the Psalter and then from Isaiah, just put these words into Jesus mouth, put these words into Jesus mouth right now, "He is not today ashamed to call us brothers saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And the words of Isaiah, behold I, and the children God has given me. If you want to learn what it means to worship God, get those verses into your mind and apply them to our worship every time you come into this room. Whenever you hear one of the ministers saying, let us worship God understand the Lord Jesus coming to the presence of his father and saying, Father, Here am I, and the children you have given me. Whenever we stand to sing God's praises, this, we are to think that Jesus, by the power of his Spirit stands among us to lead our worship. He sings, as we are told here, the praises of God, in the midst of the great congregation.

I had the audacity to tell the 8:30 service this morning, that they don't sing nearly as well as the 11:15 service. You probably wouldn't if you came at 8:30, either. It's it's not so easy. I find, I was made to preach at 11:30. And I find no matter how early I get up in the morning, the 8:30 service is still the 8:30 service. So what's going to help me to understand that Jesus is leading his people in praise. And more than anything else I want, I want my voice to be heard, even if it's not much of a voice to be covered by the voice of Jesus, singing the praises of God. And just in case I've scratched your back too much, beloved 11:15 congregation, we are not where we need to be yet in density, in intensity. How we long that when people come to our church, the first thing that strikes them, because it's going to have to strike them, the sermon is not the first thing that strikes anybody. They're going to have to wait half the service before they hear the sermon. It would be a grave tragedy if we came to this church just for the sermons or the preachers. Among other things, we should come to this church for the singing. My dear friends, just as it's true, isn't it? That all it takes for somebody to think this is a very unfriendly church is for two of us to be unfriendly, in the midst of the friendliest people in the world. If two of us are unfriendly, beside a visitor then, as far as that visitor is concerned, that's an unfriendly church. And the same goes with singing. The gospel makes us sin. But what makes us sing with joy is

the knowledge that we are joining our worship leader, the Lord Jesus. Well, there's so much more in that. Let me move on to the fourth thing, if you're still tracking with me.

Jesus is the King Who reigns in glory. He is the pioneer who shares our humanity. He's the worship leader in our liturgy. And then you notice in verses 14 through 16, he is the conqueror of our greatest enemy. He comes to share our flesh and blood. Notice here, verse 14, that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. He destroys the fear of death by entering the very death which we fear in order to break its neck. This was something that really gripped the early Christians because they knew Jesus had risen from the grave. And in that confidence, they understood that if he had broken the power of death, and in breaking the power of death as the wages of sin and as the consequences of our guilt, he must also have dealt with the one who uses our fear of death to keep us in lifelong bondage, and set us free not only from death, but set us free from bondage to Satan.

Now this is really important. Many of us in this room are deeply troubled by all kinds of fears. Indeed, it would be true to say, wouldn't it?, that all of us here at some time or another, we are troubled by fears. Some of us even go for therapy because we are troubled by fears. Vast numbers of people pay vast amounts of money to secular therapists, because they suffer from fears. And the secular therapists at the end of the day are not able to give them the medicine that the gospel gives us. What is that medicine? It's this. The reason you have fears and anxieties is because you fear death. Deep down underneath the Gospel tells you if you can be delivered from the greatest fear, the ultimate fear of death, which means you lose everything and especially you lose the control over your life that has been so central to your life... If by God's grace, you can be delivered from that fear, then all the other fears that become loud monsters in the night the gospel will pierce and reduce to manageable proportions because you have been delivered from the parent fear.

My friend, Patrick Smith, Professor of Mathematics in university in the city in which I was born, daughter died, first year, college student died very suddenly -- 18 years old. Remember, at the memorial service... the end after the committal shaking my friend's hand. What, what was I to say to him? What words could? Well, he spoke to me. I'll never forget it. He said, "We know now that we have absolutely nothing left to fear." You see when your Savior is this big, he delivers you from these fears -- conquers our greatest enemy.

And then he says in verses 17 to 18, that Jesus is also the priest who helps us in the frailty of our humanity. The King who reigns in glory. The captain who shares our humanity. The one who leads our liturgy. The conqueror of our greatest enemy. And the priest who helps us in the frailty of our humanity. I want to say to you with all my heart, dear friends, you need a priest. You need a priest. But there is only one priest in this church. There's only one priest

whose able to help you in the frailty of your humanity. And that's this priest, Jesus, our Great High Priest. Offered his blood and died. It's all I need. And so you see he says this priest is all sufficient for your forgiveness. Because he has made, verse 17, propitiation for the sins of the people. He's born the judgment of God against our sins. He's finished the work. Nothing needs to be added to it. What more can you do to be assured that your sins are forgiven? What do you need to do to be assured your sins are forgiven? There is nothing you can do to bring about the forgiveness of your sins. But the good news is there it's nothing you need to do. He has done it all. But it's more than that. Christ has finished his work of propitiation. But he continues his work of preservation. Look at what he says in verse 18, because he himself has suffered when tempted. He was tempted. He suffered when he was tempted, but he conquered when he was tempted. And so he is able to help those who are being tempted. You being tempted today? The winds of life, the storms of life threatening to drown you? Where are you going... you've got a look somewhere. And he's saying, oh, lift up the eyes of your heart to the Lord Jesus. And you'll find that he is a very present help in time of trouble. He's been through the temptations. He's been deeper down than you and I go in our temptations. We given so soon, but he never gave in. And therefore the temptation became all the stronger. All the more powerful. All the most overwhelming. But because he has conquered he is able to help you. This is the thing he is both willing and able to preserve us in our need. And the author is going on to say therefore make sure you're looking at Jesus. Looking at Jesus today?

Years and years ago, when our children were small... End of a Sunday evening service in Glasgow. I noticed that one of our children was, he was upset. He was distressed. Just a little boy. The sermon actually had been on Peter getting out of the boat and going to Jesus and the winds, his eyes on the winds and, and sinking. I said to him, as any father would say, what's wrong? What's happened? Tell me. And he turned to me and he said, "Dad I think I've been taking my eyes off the Lord Jesus." You may have been doing that for a very long time. He's worth looking at. So fix your eyes on Jesus. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look, full in his wonderful face. Things of earth they won't go away. The troubles, the problems, the anxieties, those things out there, they won't go away. But they will become strangely dim in the light of His glory and Grace. My friend, where are you looking? Let's all, every one of us, young and old together look to Him.

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Father, we thank You that You've given us such a marvelous Savior. And with all our hearts, we want to love Him and trust Him and serve Him for His glory. We pray you'd help us. In His name. Amen.