

Weekly Reflection – No Longer a slave to the fear of death.

Thanatophobia (fear of death)

- ***“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” Hebrews 9:27 ESV***
- Is there any hope to be delivered from the fear of death?

Hebrews 2:14-18

- Christ came to deliver you from the fear of death and make you free, by destroying the one who has the power of death.

How did Jesus destroy the devil and set us free from lifelong slavery to the fear of death?

1. (Verse 14a) - You are human.
 - o ***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood. . . ”***
2. Second (Verse 14b) - Christ became human.
 - o ***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things...”***
 - o Since the children whom God loved and wanted to save were human, He took on the same human nature.
3. Third (Verse 14c) - Christ did this so that He could die.
 - o ***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death...”***
 - o In His divine nature alone Christ's life was indestructible (Hebrews 7:16). He could not die.
 - o But a death was necessary to deal with guilt and the punishment of sin. So, Christ became human precisely so that He could die.
4. Fourth (Verse 14d) - In dying, Christ destroyed the one who has the power of death, the devil.
 - o ***“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...”***
 - o In dying Christ defeated the power of the devil and took away his ability to destroy by death.
5. Fifth (Verse 15) - The effect of defeating the devil in this way is that we are delivered from slavery to the fear of death.
 - o ***“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 subject to lifelong slavery.”***

How Does the Death of Christ Defeat the Power of the Devil in Death?

What stands out when you compare verse 17 with the flow of thought in verses 14 and 15 is that both of them speak of Christ having to become like us. Verse 17 says, ***“He had to be made like His brothers in every respect.”*** Verse 14 says, ***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things...”*** In order to accomplish something Christ had to become one of us.

Verse 14 says that Christ became like us ... so that He could die and destroy the one who has the power of death, the devil, and set us free from the fear of death. Verse 17 says that Christ became like us ... so that He might become a High Priest to make propitiation for our sins. Now what the high priest did

in the Old Testament was make sin offerings for the people, including himself, so that their sins could be forgiven. On the Day of Atonement the high priest represented all the people before God and offered a substitutionary sacrifice on their behalf. Jesus needed to be a human high priest, so that He could not only be the priest who makes the offering, but also as the offering that He makes. So, Christ became human like us in His work as high priest so that the offering He made could be Himself. It's the same as verse 14: he needed to be human in order to die.

Propitiation

But now notice that in verse 17 the aim of the death of Christ, the work of the high priest, was "to make propitiation for the sins of the people," while in verse 14 the aim of the death of Christ is "to destroy the devil who had the power of death." Seeing this is the key to how the death of Christ strips the devil of his power in death. Christ destroyed the devil and set us free from the fear of death by becoming a High Priest and making propitiation for our sins.

How does this work? That big word "propitiation" simply means Jesus satisfied God's anger at us for our sins. Propitiation refers to the satisfaction of God's justice. Satisfied the punishment our sin deserved. At the cross, God poured out His wrath against sinners on Jesus, thereby satisfying God's demand for the just punishment of sin. God's wrath was satisfied, and His righteousness was vindicated. Propitiation enables God to be both just and justifier.

The Only Lethal Weapon the Devil Has

Now how does that destroy the one who has the power of death, the devil? It doesn't mean Christians don't die a physical death, sometimes very painful ones. And it doesn't mean the devil is gone. The only weapon the devil can use to destroy us in death is our unforgiven sin. If your sins are forgiven and the wrath of God is removed from you, and you stand righteous before God in Jesus Christ by faith, and God is for you and not against you, then the devil is rendered powerless: he cannot destroy you. ***"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV***

What About all the Threats to our Faith Leading Up to Death?

So, the one who has the power of death, the devil, has been destroyed; and we have been freed from lifelong slavery to the fear of death. But what about dying. What about the pain and the losses that lead up to death? What about the process of dying? R.C. Sproul said, "It's not death I'm afraid of, it's dying." It's the degeneration, the loss of our powers, the humiliation of becoming senile, the pain, the breaking away of loved ones. What about all the trials and temptations to give up and despair in these things?

I think verse 18 is meant to encourage us here. It says, ***"For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."*** In other words, Christ took on weak, vulnerable human nature not only so that He could experience death, but also that He could experience dying, and then sympathize with the temptations that come with suffering and dying. He knows what we are going through. ***"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16 ESV***

