

Hebrews 2:14-18

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**Hebrews 2:14-18 14** *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, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. 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. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In this last year of a presidential term, we hear a lot about building a legacy. What will history see as president Barack Obama's legacy? The jury is still out. But after scouring multiple internet articles on the subject, the best guesses at this point in order of current popularity are (1) the first man of color in the white house, (2) his 2010 signature health care law, known as "Obamacare", (3) multiple steps to shield millions of illegal aliens from deportation, (4) a nuclear arms deal with Iran, (5) an historic thaw in relations with Cuba, (6) a rebounding U.S. economy.

I would suggest that a legacy is something built over a lifetime of achievement, and not something that can be created in a final term of one's presidency or life. Each of us is building a legacy whether we are mindful of it or not, and we create that legacy in every choice we make. Above all, may our legacy be a life-long faithfulness to being a disciple and representative of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Can you imagine what a legacy president Obama, or any president, would have if he could . . .

1. Stop crime and death in all our cities
2. Set free and successfully rehabilitate all prisoners
3. Mediate peace between the U.S. and all foreign powers

Wow – not THAT would be a presidential legacy!

We will discover that today's passage reveals this 3-fold earthly legacy of Jesus! – on a world-wide spiritual scale!

**JESUS' EARTHLY LEGACY**

- 1. Rendered powerless the devil, death and sin**
- 2. Freed and rehabilitated spiritual prisoners**
- 3. Mediated peace between God and man**

**1. RENDERED POWERLESS THE DEVIL, DEATH AND SIN (2:14)**

**v. 14b** *"that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil"*

- a. Note first, that **this was done "through death"** – the death of Jesus, who experienced spiritual death for all (v. 9). The very moment Jesus died, the Scriptures relate 3 physical events that occurred simultaneously that were a sign of what had happened spiritually.
  1. There was a powerful EARTHQUAKE. This mimics the powerful breaking of sin's hold on mankind.

2. There was an OPENING OF GRAVES with many coming out from death to life. This mimics the setting free of spiritual prisoners to new life – the bringing of “many sons to glory” (v. 10),
3. There was the SPLITTING OF THE CURTAIN in the temple between the Holy of Holies (God’s residence) and the Holy Place (the residence of man made perfect). This mimics the peace made between God and man by Jesus’ death.

Again, all this was done through the death of Jesus.

b. Second, note that **the devil was the one rendered powerless**. In John 14:30 Jesus was speaking to his disciples in the upper room and said:

**John 14:30** *I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*

Since the garden of Eden, the devil has been the ruler of the world. This is not a power he earned or deserved, but a power that was given him by God Himself. It was to be for a time only. At the death of Jesus the devil’s power was broken, and at the second coming of Jesus at the end of the age, his power will be defeated. We can say that for now, since the death of Christ, the devil is severely crippled and restrained in his ability to harm.

c. Thirdly, note the power of the devil that was **specifically broken was the power of death**. Again, since the garden of Eden, death and sin have been intimately related. Sin brought the penalty of death – both physical and spiritual. And the sting of death is sin, as Paul reminded us.

**1 Corinthians 15:56-57** *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.*

So sin and death are intimately related. We sin, we die. Every time we commit a sin something dies in us. There is a stench of death.

The primary tools of Satan’s death-grip on sin and death are FEAR and GUILT.

Apart from a Savior, these bind us and haunt us. Whether we run a red light or lie to a friend, we experience a degree of FEAR and GUILT. And whenever we encounter death, these tools are all the sharper in our mind and heart – fear of dying and guilt of sin.

But as Charles Wesley wrote in his famous hymn, “O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing” –

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin  
He sets the prisoner free  
His blood can make the foulest clean  
His blood availed for me!”

## 2. FREED AND REHABILITATED SPIRITUAL PRISONERS (2:15-16)

Paul, in his letter to the Romans said this:

**Romans 6:6-7** *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; for he who has died is freed from sin.*

Paul is saying that before we are saved, we are slaves of sin – we have no choice but to sin.

We are prisoners of the death sentence of sin, and Satan is our jailer.

But when we say “yes” to Jesus and identify with His death as the death of our sin, “he who has died is freed from sin” – that is, freed from having to sin – we now have a choice. Satan, the jailer, has been rendered powerless to hold us, and we have been given the power of God to say “no” to sin for the first time. Sadly, when we continue to sin, we are not taking advantage of the freeing and rehabilitating power of God.

When the Hebrews author tells us in 2:16 that God does not give help to angels, but to the descendants of Abraham, there are at least two things to notice.

1. **“Help” speaks of rehabilitation.** We are not only “set free” but we are rehabilitated. We are cleaned and made a “new creature” in Christ. For the first time in our life,

we as Christians have the power of God to resist the devil and overcome sin in our life.

**1 Corinthians 10:17** *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

2. This **help is not given to all mankind**, or it would read “to the descendants of Adam.” But it reads “to the “descendants of Abraham”, meaning to the spiritual descendants of Abraham – to the children of God, both Jews and Gentiles. We as Jesus’ followers have a help given to us through the death of Jesus that the unbelieving world does not have – namely, the ability to choose rehabilitation. So choose it!

### 3. MEDIATED PEACE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

This is the third “legacy” of Jesus in His humanity mentioned in this passage. And it is the one that the author will especially continue to build upon in the chapters to come.

An earthly priest, whether Levi or Aaron or any of their priestly line, was one chosen and appointed by God as a mediator between God and man. He would represent the sinner before God, in bringing the sinner’s sacrifice to the altar of God for God’s approval. God’s approval or satisfaction was what is called “propitiation.” The priest, then, is our advocate before God.

**1 John 2;1a-2** *And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

Notice here that the propitiation or satisfaction that our Advocate, Jesus, brings to the Father on our behalf is Himself – His righteousness, His sinless perfection given in death on our behalf. And note further that the whole world has this same Advocate – but they must choose Him as such. All are not automatically at peace with God because Jesus died. The ransom was given for all (1 Timothy 1:6) but the mediated peace is for those who choose the Advocate as their own

**John 1:12** *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

And remember, His name is “Savior” – and that is what we must believe that He is for us personally.

Here in verse 17 is the first mention in Hebrew of Jesus as Priest. But as we have been saying in previous messages, this will become one of the primary themes of the book – the Priesthood of Jesus.

Lastly, for today, let us take a look at verse 18, where we learn the amazing value to us of Jesus’ temptation.

First note that it was through His sufferings that He experienced temptation. We noted last week in v. 10 that Jesus was “perfected” or better, “equipped” to be the Captain of our Salvation through sufferings. And we learn in v. 18 that those sufferings brought temptations. Temptations to what? – to sin! Remember, temptation is not sin. We learn later in Hebrews 4:15 that He was tempted, but without sin. But the many temptations that Jesus experienced through suffering equipped Him to EMPATHIZE or relate to us in our temptations and sufferings.

We want a mediator to relate to our side of things. Jesus clearly relates to God’s side of things as the perfect Son of God and Deity Himself. But as man, he also fully relates to me in my temptation and suffering. This makes Him the perfect mediator and priest!!

**So do you see it clearly? Jesus’ earthly legacy, as given in Hebrews 2:14-18 is a super-legacy:**

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**So - know that the power of sin has been broken**

“he breaks the power of cancelled sin”

Remember the earthquake when Jesus died!

**So – live free from the bondage of Satan**

“He sets the prisoner free”

Remember the graves opened when Jesus died!

**So - let His blood bring peace between you and God**

“His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood avails for me”

Remember the torn veil when Jesus died!

Oh, for a 1000 tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise!

What a legacy Jesus has left!