What Did Jesus Do To Save Me?
Hebrews 2:10-18
Hebrews, Day 9

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹² saying,

"I will tell of your name to my brothers;
*   in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."*

¹³ And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Behold, I and the children God has given me."

¹⁴ 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, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

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- Hebrews 2:10-18, ESV

Last time, we learned that Jesus was made like us so He could identify with us in our struggles. But here's something important to consider: I need more than just sympathy from Jesus. I am profoundly thankful that, because of Christ's incarnation, I have a merciful high priest in heaven, One who was made just like me in every respect (except sin), and was tempted and tried as a human being. Jesus' empathy for me is not something I take lightly, as it cost Him so much to gain. But I need more than just someone who can relate to me. I need more than sympathy; I need salvation.

So, the other question I ask of Hebrews 2:10-18 and the incarnation of Jesus is this: When Jesus became truly human, what exactly did He do to save me? Well, the answer to that question is tied up in this strange, long word in verse 17: propitiation. Jesus was made like His brothers in every respect "*to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*"

Propitiation is one of the most difficult and important words in the Bible. We find propitiation at the heart of Paul's explanation of the Gospel in Romans 3:23-25 -

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (ESV)

Nothing in life is more important for us to understand than those verses. At the heart of these verses is the truth that God put forth Jesus "as a propitiation by his blood." This is the same thing Hebrews 2:17 says, that Jesus made propitiation for the sins of the people. So, what is propitiation?

Propitiation is the satisfaction of God's just wrath against sin. Because God is perfectly holy and perfectly just, He must punish all sin. If God were to be willing to sweep sin under the rug or just look the other way or just let us off the hook, He would not be holy and just. To have the God of the Universe, the Maker and Sustainer of all things, be anything less than perfectly holy and just is terrifying. It would mean that God is changeable and subject to corruption and less than perfect. Such a God could not be relied on to keep His promises, uphold His commitments or do anything good. We would, in essence, have a corrupt politician in change of the universe.

Thankfully, God is not a corrupt politician.. He is holy, holy, holy and He never changes. He is perfectly just and always punishes all sin. For God to put forth Jesus as a propitiation and for Jesus to make propitiation for our sins means simply this: God the Father was willing to punish His Son in our place and His Son was willing to be punished for us. All the just wrath we deserve, which we would experience in eternal hell, was instead poured out on Jesus on the cross, and He willingly took it all in our place.

So, what did Jesus do to save me? He became sin for me and absorbed all the wrath I deserve for me. In doing so, Jesus died a death that set me free. As Hebrews says, Jesus died "*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.*" (vv. 14-15) If God's wrath against my sin has been satisfied and the penalty due for my sins has been paid, the devil no longer has any accusation he can make against me and death has lost its fearful power.

"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 15:55-57, ESV