

HEBREWS 1:3 My Redeemer is God

As we continue in our study of Hebrews we must keep in mind that this entire letter has one central theme and person to whom we are to look and that is Jesus Christ. This first chapter sets the stage for everything else that is to come. It's in this first chapter that the writer of Hebrews elevates Jesus to the position to which He belongs and that is God and King of all.

The first chapter begins to show the contrast of Jesus as God and King to the other created beings in this world including angels. It is only when we see Jesus for who He really is that we will be able to follow Him with the confidence that we are not following a mere man but the Creator of this world who bids us to follow.

And as we begin to understand how awesome and glorious our God is we will see our faith in Him grow in direct proportion to this understanding. When you have a "big" God your faith enlarges because your trust in Him rests in His power and his abilities.

Our writer points out that Jesus is this awesome God in whom we've trusted. He is no less than the Creator Himself as we see in HEB 1:2 "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

And so we continue to see how Jesus is the One who is not only the Son of man, but also King and Lord and Savior who is God our hope, the Son of God.

HEB 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Let's start with the beginning of verse 3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory" . This little phrase shows us that the Father and the Son are one in nature. To radiate God's glory is to shine with the same brightness of His glory. To do that you must be of the same essence.

When the star we call the sun radiates we feel its effects. In fact we speak of the light of the sun as being of the same essence of the sun when we say things like, 'the sun is bright today, or the 'sun is hot today'. We don't mean that the star is hot or bright today, but the radiance of the sun that we experience. We equate the two because you can't have one without the other. They are inseparable.

In the same way Jesus is the radiance of God's glory because they are of the same nature. That's why Jesus said to His disciples in JOH 14:7-9 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

When we are touched by Jesus as He gives us eternal life we are touched by God Himself because they are one and the same. Verse 3 continues this thought.

HEB 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being,

The exact representation of his being, or nature, carries with it the idea of being indistinguishable. To speak of the very essence of God and the very essence of Jesus you are speaking of the exact same essence. Paul brings this out in 2CO 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The Greek word used for exact representation in Heb.1:3 is (charakter) which is where we get our English word character, which could mean a symbol used to describe a particular letter of the alphabet.

And so by inference they're interchangeable. If I say the letter A, you think of the character which has two slanted lines coming together at the top with a vertical line in between connecting the two slanted lines. If I were to show you this character you would immediately think of A. (One and the same)

The Greek word karakter goes a little further by including the idea of a stamp or a die which casts an identical copy. Dr. Donald Guthrie puts it this way. "The word used here for stamp (or representation) is the word for a die or an engraving. It is highly expressive since a stamp on a wax seal will bear the same image as the engraving on the seal. The illustration cannot be pressed too far, for it must not be supposed that the Son is formally distinct from the Father as the stamp is from the impression it creates. There is nevertheless an exact correspondence between the two."

Again, keep in mind that the writer of Hebrews is building a case for Jesus being the very God who created all things and has given us life. The reason he is doing this is because, as we'll see later in this letter, some were doubting and becoming unfaithful to their Savior thinking

that Jesus was less than God and therefore were not obliged to follow Him as God.

But he goes on in this verse 3 to say... HEB 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

"Sustaining all things by his powerful word". This is the way the NIV puts it. If you were to go to the KJV, the NKJV or the NAS version you would see that the order of the words is arranged to a literal rendering which reads, "he upholds", or "sustains all things by the word of His power."

This is an important distinction to understand because it places the emphasis on the power of God on which His word rests. There are many in the church today who have taken this verse and have concluded that there is power in the word and they would not be incorrect except that they conclude that the words are the power.

What this has done is to shift the focus away from God's inherent power in a way where simply speaking the words of God gives power. The word faith movement in this country has done this, whereby simply speaking the words releases the power.

His "powerful word" is different from the "word of His power". When God spoke the universe into existence the ability to create didn't come from Him speaking words, it came from His power as He spoke. And so we need to be careful not to think that simply speaking God's word carries some magical power, rather we should depend on the power of God as we speak on His behalf.

Now in God's case it may be hard to make a distinction because when He speaks He accomplishes all things because He is all powerful. But He Himself does make a distinction when showing us that when we simply speak words, even the word of God, it does not necessarily mean the power flows to change things unless He personally acts in His power to make the change.

When speaking to the Sadducees who were trying to trick Jesus into a wrong answer to a question Jesus said in MAT 22:29 "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

To show how the words of Jesus and the power of Jesus didn't necessarily have to follow each other we read in MAR 5:30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

Jesus didn't come to this woman and say, "be healed." His power is what heals not necessarily the command of His mouth saying be healed.

But be assured that when Jesus says be healed someone is healed because of the word of His power.

I don't want to spend a lot of time here I just want to point out that words that we utter from our mouths do not necessarily carry power to accomplish what we say, unless God in His sovereignty decides to accompany such words with His power. It's entirely up to Him. We don't pull God's strings because we may happen to utter words, even the word of God.

But we must never forget that all true power comes from God and we must be willing to trust that His power in our lives will not only enable us to walk with Him but to accomplish His will as we reach out to this world with His gospel.

Paul touches on this in ROM 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

The power of the Gospel doesn't come from us uttering words describing what Jesus did on our behalf; the power of the Gospel comes from God acting in His power to give us life from above as words are used to describe what this Gospel is.

Only God's power can change a heart and give it life. But He has graciously given His people a role in participating in His work as we go out with this life changing news. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God", but it is the word of His power which effects the result He desires.

And keep in mind too that for you and me the same power of God who created this world and can change the hearts of people, as He gives them life, is the same power which He gives to enable us to walk in that new life. That's why He has given us His Spirit who is God, who is all powerful.

EPH 3:20-21 "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

And if you ever doubt if God and the word of His power is sufficient to enable us to walk victoriously in this life then listen to what Peter tells us.

2PE 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

We need to walk in the power of His Spirit as we humbly trust and rely on Him for all things and not walk according to the flesh which only produces fleshly results no matter how much you utter words which you think in themselves will empower you to overcome temptation.

It's when we become doers of the word that we find His power and victory and not just hearers of the word where we actually find ourselves, as James points out in his epistle, being deceived. If there are strongholds in our lives we don't simply speak the word against it thinking that the power lies in the words, we act on the word in fleeing from it, relying on His power.

Listen to what Paul says in this regard to this.

2CO 10:4-5 "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. {(And the weapons are our spiritual armor found in Eph.6) Truth, righteousness, Gospel of peace, faith, salvation, Word of God, prayer.} We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

The weapons we have are from God and the power we are given to walk in these weapons is from God, but it's not separated from our submission and obedience to God.

God is Almighty, all powerful and only He can give life and sustain it. The word sustain in the NIV can also be translated upholding. The idea is that when God created all things He didn't exclude Himself from its continued existence. He continues to actually hold everything together Himself.

In a crude sort of description, He is the personal super-glue which keeps everything from flying out into space. The apostle John understood this when he wrote in REV 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

COL 1:17 "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Scientists have always pondered this idea of what holds everything together? What force allows everything to continue in its present state? They have arrived at some conclusions. For many years scientists believed that atoms were the smallest particles which made up the universe and that these atoms held everything together (impersonal force).

However, in recent years they've theorized that there are other smaller particles which are contained in the nucleus which make up and hold an atom together. The Grolier Encyclopedia under the heading, "Modern Nuclear Physics", has this article:

By 1932 nuclei were known to be composed of protons and neutrons. It was then necessary to explain how nuclei were held together, and in 1935, Japanese physicist Hideki Yukawa predicted a smaller Fundamental particle that was the carrier of a theorized strong interaction, one of the four Fundamental interactions, or forces. This particle, called a pi-meson, was discovered in 1947. Since then a host of particles smaller than protons and neutrons have been discovered in the nucleus, all falling within two classes: Fermions, which obey the Pauli Exclusion Principle, and Bosons (pi-mesons are an example), which carry the fundamental force.....

..... Modern Nuclear physics centers on fundamental interactions between fermions and their corresponding bosons. Bosons that carry the strong nuclear force are now theorized to be pairs or triplets of Quarks. The bosons involved in carrying the weak interaction, responsible for nuclear decay, are the W, Z, and Higgs particles; the last have not yet been observed. Protons and neutrons are composed of particles representing all four forces."

Now, if you could follow any of that you picked up on the idea that scientists, for all their theorizing, don't have a clue as to what holds atoms, and therefore the universe, together. The word of God has always told us what upholds all things, and that is the Creator, Jesus Himself.

Without His personal interaction with His creation nothing would hold together. This is just one more way in which we see that there isn't anything that is beyond His control. We get all excited when we don't see God work in a way to our liking and we wonder if He has this area of life under control.

We doubt if He'll come through for us when our finances are in disarray, or when we get sick, or when His timing isn't on our timetable. If God wasn't in control we'd have a much bigger problem than any of these things, because if He wasn't in total control we'd be scattered throughout the universe trying to hunt down each of our atoms which has split off in every direction because the God who upholds everything lifted His sustaining power from His creation.

You and I really haven't got a clue as to the extent of His Almighty power. We can only trust that He is all powerful because our atoms which make up our bodies are still intact.

But getting back to our text we see this power has been shown in the way Christ accomplished fully what the Father had sent Him to do. Sometimes we think the only thing Jesus came from the Father to do was to die for the penalty of our sins. He certainly was to do that but without complete victory over sin and death the job would only be half finished.

This is why the resurrection of Christ was essential but even that isn't the whole story. The resurrection necessarily leads to Christ going back to the Father victoriously. This is why the writer of Hebrews, even though he doesn't mention the resurrection, includes it in this way.

HEB 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

This Almighty God, this marvelous creator, this awesome King, knew that unless He intervened on our behalf, there would be no fellowship with Him. He created us for fellowship with Himself and only one thing could satisfy His divine justice which was death for our sin.

This God, this awesome Creator, loved us so much that He humbled Himself to actually become a part of His own creation. He took on flesh, born of a virgin, and then proceeded to live in this world without ever sinning. After having satisfied fully the requirement to live a perfect life to be able to be our representative, He then chose to take our place and die for the penalty of our sins.

This is what the writer of Hebrews means when he writes that Jesus made purification for our sins. The idea of purification means to cleanse, as in making perfectly clean, so as to stand in the presence of God in that cleansing completely justified.

That cleansing is what enables us to come before God by faith in this Messiah who died for us, and to say to our Creator, 'I am clean'. I have been declared not guilty because of what Jesus did on my behalf. I have been purified by the One who is pure in all ways and I come to you in His cleansing power, not in any righteousness I can bring to you of my own.

Paul points this out in TIT 2:11-14 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who

gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

But after having made purification for our sins He made a public spectacle of His triumph by rising from the dead and being exalted as he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

His work was completed in obtaining our salvation and bringing us back to Himself as we trust Him alone for our salvation. But what demonstrates that His work was complete was not in His resurrection alone. It is in the act of sitting down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

This picture is a way of showing that Jesus took His rightful place from which He originally came and now was being received by the Father to His place of honor as the King He is.

The posture of sitting down is a Biblical metaphor indicating that all work of sacrifice has been accomplished and there is nothing left to be done. It is a sign of resting from the work.

Jesus prophesied this completion of His word, to which He was sent in the world from the Father, to accomplish on the day that He was to be crucified when he stood before the Jewish council.

LUK 22:66-71; 23:1 "At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You are right in saying I am." Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." 23:1 Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate."

They convicted Him of blasphemy because He told them that He would be seated at the right hand of the mighty God. They knew there was only one person who was worthy of such a position.

This was the same person identified in PSA 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

We'll see this verse next week as the writer of Hebrews takes us on an extended venture through the O.T. as he identifies this one spoken of in the O.T. as the Messiah who is none other than God Himself.

Paul addresses the magnificent honor given to Christ when he wrote of Jesus in EPH 4:10 "He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe."

God the Father has given the Son all authority and power and the Son has given the Father a people for His own possession to honor and glorify Himself; that's you and me. The son receives this honor from the Father as He is identified with us being our Redeemer.

PHI 2:8-11 "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This Jesus is the One true God and this Jesus is the One we must trust because, not only does He hold all things together, He personally calls us to Himself, gives us life eternal and then personally comes to us and empowers us to represent Him in this world so that we too may bow our knees and hearts to Him and confess, not only with our mouths, but with our lives that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

F.F. Bruce in his commentary on Hebrews concludes (Jesus) "is the prophet through whom God has spoken His final word; He is the priest who has accomplished a perfect work of cleansing for his people's sin; He is the King who sits enthroned in the place of chief honor alongside the Majesty on High."

Again, the point the writer of Hebrews is trying to drive home, and which I believe the Holy Spirit has accomplished, is that Jesus is our capable God who holds us and carries us and empowers us for His honor and glory.

Let me end with a quote from Andrew Murray on this very thing. "As often as we are tempted with the Hebrews to sloth or fear or unbelief, let this be our watchword and our strength: My Redeemer is God! In this faith let me worship Him. My Redeemer is God!

..... Let my whole heart be opened up to Him, to receive, as flower does the light of the sun, His secret, mighty divine working in me. My Redeemer is God! Let me trust this omnipotent Lord to work out in me His every promise, and to set up His throne of righteousness in my soul in a power that is above all we ask or think.

..... My Redeemer is God! Let me wait for Him, let me count upon Him, to reveal Himself in the love that passes knowledge. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever. My Redeemer is God!"