

Steward the Truth as Shared Humanity

Hebrews 2:14-18

¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) ¹⁵ and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham's offspring. ¹⁷ For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

"What is there that binds us together—human beings from different times and places—such that there might be some point of useful contact between us?" In his book *Crisis of Confidence*, author Carl Trueman raises this question as an example of a perspective that's increasingly characteristic of today's culture. It's a perspective that sees a profound disconnect between the present and what's come before. It's one that often considers the present as very much superior to what's come before.

We see all sorts of examples of that outlook today. In the sports culture of our country there's been an increasing tendency toward rethinking team names that could be offensive. Or take our nation's view toward racial equality. Most people in our country today certainly approve of the work of leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to bring about greater equality. Most people in our country would agree that slavery practiced in our history was an abomination that needed to come to an end. There are judgments in the present that what happened in the past was not right. We are thankful that today is different.

This elevation of the present as superior over the past has only accelerated now in the 21st century. It's driven along by significant advancements in human knowledge. Take scientific knowledge as an example. In the 5th century BC, a Greek philosopher named Empedocles suggested that fire, earth, air, and water were the four basic elements of our world. Today, the periodic table categorizes over a hundred chemical elements. Clearly, our modern scientific knowledge of the physical world is leaps and bounds ahead of where it was 2500 years ago. The same is true with medicine. When I see a doctor, he or she doesn't evaluate the balance of four humors inside me—yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm. Instead, modern medicine has given us modern treatments like Tylenol and Robitussin and Dr. Scholl's.

Perhaps we observe this most clearly in technology. Many of us have a smartphone. If you do, you're carrying around technology that's incredibly more powerful than the Apollo 11 computer that took us to the moon and back. In the same way, our homes have high-speed internet and on demand entertainment. Our vehicles whisk us from point A to point B in relative comfort. The world has become a smaller place. We travel faster and communication has become easier and cheaper. Technology has drastically transformed our daily lives.

All of this contributes to a disconnect between the past and the present. It is far more than our grasp of knowledge. It's about our grasp of humanity. Culture today views itself as possessing a more sophisticated and developed humanity than the generations that have come before us. Our moral sensibilities have advanced—at least in society's eyes—so that we're letting go

of the backward thinking of the past. We're becoming more enlightened, more fair, more human. We're advancing justice. We're expanding equality. We're changing things for the better. And of course, there have been positive developments relative to the past. But the trending thought today is about more than just some positive societal changes. It's a shift in worldview. It's the belief in a better humanity. It's the prospect that our humanity has a drop on some new, greater truth that leaves the past behind.

The problem is, it's simply not true. And this is where our focus on stewarding the truth comes into the picture. We'll consider two key aspect of knowing Christian truth. It will help us steward Christian truth and transmit that truth from one generation to the next. We'll first of all consider the unchanging truth of what it means to be human. And then we will grasp the unchanging truth that the Son of God has become human for us.

That's what the writer to the Hebrews helps us understand. He writes, "*Since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.*" In these couple verses, the writer of Hebrews summarizes an unchangeable aspect of being human in this world. We are flesh and blood. We are human beings subject to death in this world. Everyone here, everyone in town and country, on both sides of the river, everyone living shares this common condition of humanity. We will not live forever. We will face death. And generally speaking, that death will bring with it some sense of fear. We typically do not wish to die. We are uneasy about experiencing death. Most people have a natural loathing to their own lives coming to an end.

But what Scripture is talking about here is more than just the moment of death. Our verse speaks of human beings "*who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.*" There are a lot of people today who would deny living in the fear of death. Many who of them even claim that they live in acceptance of their ultimate demise. But the fear of death that Scripture reveals here is not merely the fear and uneasiness we might experience as we approach death. It's also what drives people to do everything they can to avoid it, to put it off, and delay death.

Consider the amount of money spent on healthcare in the United States. In 2022, some \$4.5 trillion was spent. That's \$13,500 for every man, woman and child in our nation. That kind of spending testifies to how hard we as human beings work to counter our mortality. It testifies to the slavery that the fear of death imposes on every person. Every human being seeks to avoid the pain and suffering common to this life. Pain and suffering exist because we are subject to death. Every person every day takes action to do this. We lock our doors to keep out danger. We pop in an aspirin to dull some ache. We talk with friends or loved ones to when we're emotional hurt. So much of our lives revolve around avoiding pain in all its varied forms. And yet it still comes. It's still there. The reality of our mortality manifests itself in every fear, every illness, every hurt. It shows itself in danger, in sadness, in discontent, in poverty, and in crime and abuse. The undeniable fact is that our lives are dominated with our dying, regardless of who we are.

We share a common humanity. Our flesh and blood are subject to death. It's the same flesh and blood as generations past. Regardless of scientific advancements, our common humanity has the common problem of sin.

When we talk about being stewards or caretakers of Christian truth, it is critical that we grasp the common condition of humanity. It's important that we help others, especially coming generations, to grasp this for themselves. They must find the only answer is Christ. A common problem unites all of humanity of all time. It cuts across generations and ages, continents and countries. But what is also true is that the Son of God himself has shared in our humanity. He's done this to rescue us from this common mortality and its common cause of sin.

This is the beautiful truth that only Christ reveals. The truth is that God's Son became a human being just like us. But he came without the evil of heart and mind, speech and actions that plague us. God's Son experienced a humanity just like ours. His life was one of pain and suffering, weakness and difficulty. His was mortal, subject to death. When John describes the Word made flesh, he doesn't mean a human life that is distant and disconnected from our common condition. He stepped right into the middle of it. He embraced it. He accepted our weak and mortal, pain-filled and suffering-prone existence as his own.

And why? So that the Son of God could be just what these verses from Hebrews describe: *"that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people."* In other words, Christ's purpose in sharing in this mortality was to rescue us from it. It was to deal with the underlying problem of sin. It was to free us from the fear of death by freeing us from the cause of death.

As terrible as our common condition is, the truth of Christ is far more beautiful. The Son of God shared in our dying humanity so that we might share in his ever-living humanity.

To be a steward of Christian truth is to deeply grasp this reality for ourselves. We must promote this understanding from one generation to the next. In short, we're talking about embracing and developing a true and Christ-centered worldview. This is our task as stewards of Christian truth.

And it's a critical one. Society continues to promote a dismissive view of the past. It assumes that we've somehow moved beyond that the deepest problems of history. Only Christian truth reveals what is difficult to acknowledge and yet is important to realize. We share a common flesh and blood mortality that connects across space and time. Only Christian truth reveals an answer that no modern belief can match. There is a God who has worked throughout history, through space and time, to deal with this. God stepped in and shared the brokenness of our humanity, to the point of dying our death. He did this to truly deliver us from it. It now means there is a better future out there. It's not in the progression of humans that is higher and better than what's come before. Only in Christ, in what he's done, his service to us sets us free from the dying humanity that we all alike share.

Dear friends, the Son of God shared in that dying humanity so that we might share in his ever-living humanity. We need never dread death again. Our Savior died our death for us. Now we get to share in his life forever. He took on our flesh, gave up his life, took up his life again, leaving us life eternal. Steward that truth.