

**Text: Heb 2.16**

We are closing in on the end of chapter 2. I could finish the chapter today, but one phrase in our text gave me a pause and occupied my attention as I prepared.

Let's have a look:

Read Heb 2.11-16

My title:

*Is Abraham Your Father?*

Does anything strike you as unusual when you think of my title and our text, Heb 2.16?

Heb 2.16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

Why does our author say, "descendant of Abraham"? Why doesn't he say, "descendant of Adam"?

We are in the section of Hebrews where the author is discussing the Incarnation, the fact that the divine Son "partook" of flesh and blood (14). The eternal Son took on human nature for a reason.

His Incarnation, his suffering, his sinlessness, his death, burial and resurrection, all of these are essential attributes of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ.

He took on all these things for the benefit of mankind.

Salvation is available for everyone and anyone.

Rm 10.9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Rm 10.13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

All of this is true. All of this is what makes the Son superior to angels, despite his humiliation as a man.

But why does he say, in our text:

He gives help to the descendant of Abraham

Why doesn't he say, "He gives help to the sons of Adam"?

**Proposition:** You don't have to be a son of Abraham to be a son of Abraham, and you *need* to have Abraham as your father.

## I. The help Jesus offers

A. The main verb in our text: "he gives help"

1. The verb is part of a word group that is one of the first words you learn in elementary Greek, "to take" or "to receive" (depends on context)
2. A compound form, "to take upon" or "to take hold of, lay one's hand on"
3. It can have a negative connotation

Lk 20.20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might **catch** Him in some statement, so that they *could* deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

Lk 20.26 And they were unable to **catch** Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

4. Positively it speaks about how believers should respond to the gospel

1 Tim 6.12 Fight the good fight of faith; **take hold of** the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Tim 6.19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may **take hold of** that which is life indeed.

5. In a use like our text Jesus takes hold of a man for his help

Lk 14.1-4 ¶ It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the* Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.<sup>2</sup> And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.<sup>3</sup> And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"<sup>4</sup> But they kept silent. And **He took hold of him and healed him**, and sent him away.

## B. A comment on the KJV translation

KJV Heb 2:16 For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

1. Notice the words added in *italics*: not in the original, provided by the translators
2. In 1611, the scholars of the day misunderstood the word

“All are now agreed that the verb does not mean ‘to take the nature of,’ but ‘to take by the hand,’ and so ‘to help’ or ‘rescue.’ Beza indeed called it ‘execrable rashness’ (*exsecranda audacia*) to translate it so, when this rendering was first adopted by Castellio in 1551; but the usage of the word proves that this is the only possible rendering, although all the Fathers and Reformers take it in the other way.”<sup>1</sup>

## C. A tremendous illustration

Mt 14.28-31 ¶ Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”<sup>29</sup> And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.<sup>30</sup> But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”<sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus **stretched out His hand and took hold of him**, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

## D. The nature of the help:

1. Offered to men, not angels
2. Offered a hand to men who could not save themselves

“When the Son of God, the Creator and Lord of angels, humbled himself, he passed by angelic estate and stooped lower still, taking to himself human nature for the redemption of the human family.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, With Notes and Introduction.*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 53.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 87.

## II. The help Jesus offers to sons of Abraham

Now we come to the sons of Abraham...

### A. The epistle is written to Jewish Christians who are wavering

1. Over and over again we say this, it fits with everything in the book of Heb
2. The readers were (apparently) thinking they could have the benefit of worshipping God without the fear of retribution as Christians
3. Their problem: undervaluing Christ
  - a. In chapter one, the author emphasizes the great name of the Son, exalted to the right hand of God
  - b. In chapter two, he emphasizes the great work of the Son, willingly humbling himself to rescue the saints

One could say, he especially reaches out his hands to the sons of Abraham, the Jews

### B. Why would we say that?

1. Jesus came into the world as a son of Abraham, a Jew
2. Jesus came "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mt 15.24)
3. He came unto his own (though his own received him not) (Jn 1.11)
4. Isaiah prophesies the help the Son offers to Israel

Isa 41.8-10 "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, <sup>9</sup> You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. <sup>10</sup> 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

So, Jesus came to help Israel...

... but we know, too, that much of Israel rejected him. There is more to the story

### III. The help Jesus offers to sons of Abraham who aren't sons of Abraham

#### A. Consider what the New Testament teaches about true sons of Abraham

Gal 3.7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Gal 3.9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Gal 3.26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3.29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Rm 4.16 ¶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

#### B. More detail from Romans 4.16-25

1. Those who are "of faith" are sons of Abraham (16)
2. God told Abraham he would be a father of many nations (17)
3. Abraham believed God's promise, not just about the land and the seed, but also about the many nations (18)
4. Abraham believed the promise when he was 100 and Sarah was 90 (19-21)
5. God credited Abraham with righteousness for his faith (22)
6. But not only Abraham, to any one who believes in Jesus for salvation (23-25)
  - a. Praise the Lord for any Jew who puts their trust in Jesus for salvation: Jesus reaches out his hand to him
  - b. Praise the Lord for any Gentile who puts their trust in Jesus for salvation: Jesus reaches out his hand to him
  - c. Praise the Lord for anyone here today who puts their trust in Jesus for salvation: Jesus reaches out his hand to him

C. The key distinction: Jesus reaches his hand out to you

1. Do you reach your hand out to him?
2. The help Jesus gives in the text is in the present tense: His hand is continually reaching out
3. Our text says, “for assuredly ...” — this implies something you already know

Do you argue with it? Do you resist it? Do you keep your hand by your side?

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** You don't have to be a son of Abraham to be a son of Abraham, and you *need* to have Abraham as your father.

Salvation is for everyone and anyone ... who will take it.

Have you taken it?

Are you a son of Abraham?