

# Sermon 11, Why His Suffering Was Suitable, Hebrews 2:10

**Proposition:** The death of Christ was the only way to bring many sons to glory, and it is fitting that our infinitely powerful God chose it to save us.

- I. Fittingness
  - A. A Neglected Concept
  - B. Appropriateness, Suitability, Seemliness
- II. God's Identity: Purpose (Final Cause) and Creator (Efficient Cause)
  - A. All Things Are For Him
  - B. All Things Are Through Him
- III. God's Purpose: To Bring Many Sons to Glory
- IV. God's Man: The Pioneer/Leader/Captain
- V. God's Method: Suffering
  - A. No Glory without Pain
  - B. No Glory without Death, v. 9
  - C. God's Power shows that Christ's death was the only way
    - 1. Even the efficient and final cause of everything can't undo sin
    - 2. Sin Is Fittingly Punished
    - 3. God Is Fittingly Vindicated

## Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, today we come to one of the most powerful single verses in the Bible. Oh, I know that this is not "He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," or "Look unto Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." But though it is not as well-known, not as obviously great, as those texts, by God's grace I will show you this morning that it deserves a place among them. As we will see, this verse clearly teaches that the death of Christ was the only way to bring many sons to glory, and that it was abundantly fitting for our all-powerful God to choose it.

### I. Fittingness

We begin by looking at the concept of fittingness. "It was fitting" is the rendering of all major modern English translations except CEB ("appropriate") and NLT ("it was only right"). What is fittingness? Why does the writer say that it was fitting for God to use suffering in perfecting Christ as Savior?

#### A. A Neglected Concept

Well, to answer those questions we need to talk about fittingness in general. Fittingness is a neglected concept. I participated some time back in a Facebook flame war over the concept of modesty. Folks, modesty in clothing is simply the larger category of fittingness applied particularly to what one is wearing. Put simply, it is not fitting to wear a ball gown for hiking in the mountains. Nor is it fitting to wear hiking boots and a camouflage poncho to a ball.

Fittingness relates to the purpose for which something is created and used. It is unfitting to haul large bales of hay on a motorcycle, just as it is unfitting to use a locomotive and flatcar to carry a single Hot Wheels car. This stuff ought to be instinctive to us. But our high culture has built its entire reputation on the destruction of the category of fittingness. Remember the brouhaha when the lacrosse team visited the Bush White House in 2005, and some of the players were wearing flip-flops? Many people in society at large considered that kind of casual shoe inappropriate, unfitting, for a visit to the President's residence.

But now, even more than in 2005, we live in the days of the transgressive. We do the inappropriate thing precisely because it's inappropriate. Public defecation is literally an issue in our nation's most progressive cities. Human beings are acting like dogs; the sense of what is fitting is MIA.

But whatever our culture and its elites think about queering us all, however they try to euthanize the fitting, it is a noble category, a good category, and one that we followers of Christ are going to hang onto. Fittingness is not dead, and it will never die. For right here, in Holy Writ, we are told that God Himself made a decision on the basis of what was fitting.

### **B. Appropriateness, Suitability, Seemliness**

The fitting is the appropriate, the suitable, the seemly. The fitting is not quite the same thing as the required; to call something inappropriate is to stop just short of calling it evil. Fittingness is not morality. But it is akin to morality, and someone who consistently indulges in the unfitting is at best imprudent — a category dangerously close to folly and thus to wickedness. When God says "Honor your father and mother" He does not add "By always wearing close-toed shoes in their presence." But though the specifics of how honor is shown vary from culture to culture, the requirement to carry oneself in a fitting way does not vary.

The Hebrew writer applies this category of fittingness to God Himself. God does what is right. We know that. But the writer further posits that God does what is fitting. God does the appropriate thing, the prudent thing, the thing that is exactly right for the conditions.

## **II. God's Identity: Purpose (Final Cause) and Creator (Efficient Cause)**

And that work of always doing the appropriate thing is very much connected to God's identity as creator and His further identity as the purpose of all creation.

### **A. All Things Are For Him**

The writer begins with the concept we are less familiar with. What does it mean to say that God is the one "for whom are all things"? Don't get it backwards and think that God has a positive attitude about all things. This is not comparable to our culture's "I just want to be there for you." Rather, this is a statement about the purpose of all created things. Rather than God being there for creation, creation is there for God. That is, all created things have the purpose of glorifying and enjoying Him.

Aristotle spoke of four causes: material, formal, efficient, and final. We can also add the exemplary and instrumental to this list. I won't explain all four causes to you today (if you want to know more, look up R.C. Sproul; I learned all this from him anyway!). But in brief, the material cause of a statue is the marble from which it is made. The formal cause is the idea in the

sculptor's mind. The efficient cause of the statue is the sculptor, who actually shapes the stone. And the final cause is to adorn a house or garden. The final cause, in other words, refers to the *telos* or purpose for which something is made.

We are used to divining the purpose of human artifacts. I can look at a car and know that its final cause is to speed down the highway with maximum comfort and minimum noise and fuel consumption. I can look at a television and know that its purpose is to recreate moving images. Well, here, and in other places, the Bible tells us that the purpose of everything that exists is to glorify God. All things were created for Him.

How is fittingness connected to God's role as the purpose of creation, the one for whom all things were made? We'll talk about that question a little later. We don't yet have enough textual information to answer it. We need to know more about God's specific purpose of bringing many sons to glory.

### **B. All Things Are Through Him**

Well, not only is God the final cause of all that exists. He is also the efficient cause of all that exists. By Him are all things. That is, they were made by Him. He put them together. He gave them form and matter and set them in motion.

Do you know God as both of these things? To know Him as the efficient cause of everything is to thank and praise Him for every awe-inspiring thing in creation. For instance, as N.D. Wilson says, we neglect insects. We stomp on them and keep them out with nets and poisons. But have you taken a moment to think about what an incredible work of God they are? Human scientists are incredibly envious. Imagine making a drone as good as a fly. This drone would be refueled in seconds, just by landing on some kind of organic matter (including poo). It could take off and land vertically and walk just as well as it flies. It could see a vast field of vision. And it would be uncannily good at preserving itself from attack.

Yeah, there is absolutely no comparison between DJI's latest quadcopter and the magic of the common housefly. And we're not even talking about the gaudier insects like butterflies and dragonflies and honeybees and tarantulas. God made those things. He is their efficient cause. He loves the intricate and the beautiful and the brightly colored. And He also has a soft spot for maggots — at least, He made an awful lot of them.

Do you worship God for the beauty and glory of everything that He has made? That is one major application of the truth that He is the efficient cause of all that is.

Secondly, do you recognize that you personally, as well as all your lands, goods, and chattels, exist to serve God? When things don't go my way, I get upset. But why should they go my way? All things don't exist for me. I'm sure your parents broke the news to you at a young age: The world doesn't revolve around you. But the glory and wonder of it is that the world *does* revolve around Jesus Christ. "Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled about the center of the silent Word." That's T.S. Eliot. And he's exactly right.

The world revolves around Christ, and so you should not worry when it doesn't revolve around you. You should accept, celebrate, and worship God because everything revolves around

Him and not around you. And you should devote your life, your time, your money to the one for whom all things exist.

### **III. God's Purpose: To Bring Many Sons to Glory**

Well, having reminded us that God does what is fitting, and that He is the undisputed Master of the Universe with full control over everything's beginning and ending and thus over its middle too, the writer reveals God's purpose. God wanted to (wants to) bring many sons to glory. He wants to gather a numerous people for Himself out of this fallen, wicked world, and take us from here to glory.

God's goal is to take us from shame to glory by adopting us as sons. What an amazing goal! We are so used to this Christian language of adoption, to calling one another "brother," that it hardly even registers anymore. Of course God is gathering sons for glory. He's been doing it for thousands of years. What's the big deal?

But brothers and sisters, it is a big deal! When you look around at the human race with unbiased eyes, you have to ask "Why on earth would God want them? Why would He want us?" Talk about fouling your own nest. Talk about being ungrateful and biting the hand that feeds you. Talk about being rebels against the very one whose power sustains and blesses us — that is what the human race is and does. Yet despite our woeful and wicked and disgusting condition, God desires to save us, and not just to save us by putting us in a nice place somewhere far away but actually to save us by bringing us into His own family to experience His own love and bliss.

That is a big deal. That is the biggest deal that ever befell the human race. That is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to us or ever could happen to us.

God wants to save us, and He wants us to do so in the most fitting way.

### **IV. God's Man: The Pioneer/Leader/Captain**

What way is that? By appointing a pioneer, an *archegos*, a captain. The most literal translation of this word is probably "originating leader." Those words do not convey a whole lot of information to the English speaker's mind. Hence other attempts to render the word by "captain" or "pioneer", or even "author" or "leader". God brings many sons to glory by means of this originating leader. He is the beginning or *arche* — "in the beginning God created." And He is the leader. Thus, Christ both gets salvation started and leads us into it. Hence the translation "pioneer", portraying Jesus as the trailblazer leading us into the undiscovered country called Salvation. He is the wagon train leader. He is the one commanding the ship that carries us to Heaven. The originating leader of salvation — that is the identity of God's Son.

Do you know Him as the one who is the first to enter Heaven, but who brings a whole company of sons after Him? It was fitting that He should be prepared for this task. Even He had to be perfected. And God used a particular method to bring about that perfection in the life of His Son.

### **V. God's Method: Suffering**

That method, of course, is suffering. It was not fitting for God to make the *archegos* of our salvation perfect through intense education. It was not fitting for God to perfect Him through extra-special food and comfortable clothing. It was not fitting for God to perfect Him by getting

Him a savior-of-the-world certification from Oxford University. God did not perfect Him through those means. The perfection of Christ for the role of leading many sons to glory was fittingly accomplished through suffering. Why is that?

### **A. No Glory without Pain**

Well, Paul tells us elsewhere that our light and momentary affliction is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Pain creates glory. It literally builds glory into something that exists, takes it from non-being to being. How is that possible? In a society that shuns pain, and even shuns discipline in general, we have a hard time imagining how pain could do anything good. If there is a single molecule that sums up our society's values, that molecule would be an opioid molecule. It takes away pain and it gives pleasure.

### **B. No Glory without Death, v. 9**

But that is not God's way. In God's way, glory comes through pain, and specifically through the ultimate pain of death. That's what v. 9 says: He was crowned with glory because of the suffering of death. The death created the glory, in a certain sense.

### **C. God's Power shows that Christ's death was the only way**

And so, we are at last in a position to ask how God's being the efficient and final cause of everything relates to the fittingness of perfecting Christ through suffering. Why couldn't He have been perfected through pleasure? Or at worst, through discipline and study? The answer, I believe, is that Christ's death was the only way. He could only be perfectly suited to lead many sons from shame to glory by dying, by taking the penalty of their sin. There was no other way to deal with sin.

#### **1. Even the efficient and final cause of everything can't undo sin**

The reason that the writer refers to God — uniquely in Scripture — as the efficient and final cause of everything is to emphasize His power. Literally everything exists for Him! And yet even He cannot snap His fingers and will sin away. God can do anything that is possible and moral. But He cannot make salvation happen without suffering. He cannot fit someone to lead sons from shame to glory without that man suffering the penalty due for sin.

#### **2. Sin Is Fittingly Punished**

When the captain is perfected through suffering, sin is fittingly punished. Suffering is painful with the pain that comes from acting against God. And by God's grace, that pain was taken away from you and laid on Christ. Sin was fittingly punished, not in its perpetrator but instead in an innocent scapegoat, the Lamb of God.

#### **3. God Is Fittingly Vindicated**

And when this happens, God is fittingly vindicated. He has done exactly the appropriate thing, the fitting thing. He has brought His people from shame to glory through the suffering of death by His only beloved Son. Oh, brothers and sisters, praise Him! Delight in the Lord; worship the one who fitted Christ to be your savior, not by giving Him everything His heart could wish, but by giving Him the pain, the suffering, the death you deserved. Your pain is His, but His glory is yours. God is indeed fittingly vindicated; He is just, and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. Amen.

