



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS IS BETTER • JESUS, PERFECTED THROUGH SUFFERING • HEBREWS 2:1-10; 14-18 •
5/14/2023

MAIN POINT

The love of Jesus was made perfect through his suffering so that we could be delivered from the consequences of our sins.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How can a birth of a child give us a good example of love perfected through suffering?

Mother's Day is a day we celebrate each year to commemorate the love that was demonstrated by our mothers for many years of sacrifice. It is a special day for many and a difficult day for others. Let's be honest, Mother's Day and Father's Day are just not the same, are they?

How many children would most families have if men were responsible for birthing children?

I am a proud father and one that is thankful for the godly men in my own life, but a mother's love for a child is quite different than a father's. It doesn't mean one is greater than the other but different, just the way that God created it to be.

But one day is not enough to truly give thanks to mothers. If one day is not enough for our earthly mothers, how much more should we give thanks to God for the love He extended to us through His Son Jesus?

We will look at Hebrews Chapter 2 today. The sacrifice that Jesus made for us is greater than any other sacrifice we have ever experienced in our earthly lives. It is a sacrifice that can easily

slip our minds therefore we must be reminded that Jesus' sacrifice provided for us the only means of salvation.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 2:1-4

1 "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." (ESV)

What do we need to pay closer attention to?

Why is it easier to drift away from something important versus drifting towards it?

In what ways was salvation, through Jesus, declared to us?

Hebrews Chapter 2 picks up on the key points that were presented last week in Chapter 1. We learned last week that Jesus is the perfect picture of God's nature and character making Jesus greater than all things. The author of Hebrews states that *"we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away."*

Drifting away is a natural process for us. It was once said, "It's easier to drift in the current than to turn and swim against the stream." We don't drift toward truth, only away from it. We don't drift toward the light, only away from it. We don't drift toward God, only away from Him. We must be diligent in our Christian walks to be aware that we will never drift closer to God; we must actively swim toward Him.

The work and life of Jesus was communicated through the Old Testament by angels through the prophets but now has been revealed to us by His own words, through the teachings of the apostles, and ultimately now, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 2:5-10

5 *"For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 6 It has been testified somewhere, 'What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? 7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, 8 putting everything in subjection under his feet.'* Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. 9 *But see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 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."* (ESV)

What does it mean that God is "mindful of him (mankind)"?

Why is the fact that God is mindful of us so important?

When we sit down and think about all of creation, from the smallest organisms to the most distant galaxies, there was a pinnacle of all creation, mankind. What an amazing thought!! Not only that we would come to the mind of our Creator, but that we were of such a value to God, that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for our sins.

Verse 8 states, "He left nothing outside his control". Who and what does this include?

How does the statement "made (Jesus) lower than the angels" show us that God's love is unconditional?

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the "image of the invisible God" and "for by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth" (Colossians 1:15-16). There is nothing outside of His knowledge or grasp and therefore, He is in control of all things. Colossians 1:17 goes on to say, "And he is before all things, and in Him all things consist." We can rest assured that no matter how difficult things get, none of it is outside of Jesus' control.

The statement "made (Jesus) lower than the angels" can be confusing on the surface. After a closer examination, the verse simply means that Jesus was limited, temporarily, by an earthly body, something the angels have never experienced. It doesn't mean Jesus was not God or that his deity was stripped from Him. This period of Jesus' earthly life was one of full identification with the flesh of mankind.

In what way did Jesus make salvation "perfect through suffering"?

There was no other way that salvation could have been extended to us except through the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross. Hebrews 9:22 states, *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* Without Jesus’ death, salvation would remain a distant thought for each of us. But Jesus made it possible with His own life making salvation *“perfect through suffering.”*

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 2:14-18

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.” (ESV)

What was the only way that Jesus could truly identify with mankind?

Verse 17 makes the statement, “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect”. Why was it necessary for Jesus to take on flesh?

How can Jesus identify also with our fleshly nature? How does that give us hope that Jesus completely understands what we are going through?

Three vital truths emerge in the necessity of Jesus in providing a way for humanity to be saved. Jesus must come (Incarnation), Jesus must die (Crucifixion), and Jesus must come back to life (Resurrection). These three elements are vital in the Gospel message.

The Bible states that Jesus *“had to”* come in order to save us. There was never a Plan B. Sin created a separation between humanity and God and only Jesus could bridge the gap between the two.

Praise be to God that we are not responsible for rebuilding a bridge between us and God. We are incapable to do so although many times we view our lives as a balance of good and evil. *“If I am good enough, then maybe I will be acceptable in His eyes.”* Thankfully, the Bible states right the opposite. Jesus has walked in the same shoes that we are wearing today and was tempted as we are, *“yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15).

APPLICATION

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

How vital is it that we surround ourselves with others that are actively growing in their faith?

In what ways are you personally growing in your knowledge of the truth of God's Word?

How can we encourage one another to remain faithful even amidst hardships and trials that we face in our lives?

PRAYER

God, help us to stay the course and not drift away from you. Help us to encourage one another in our Christian walks and remain faithful. Thank you for the free gift of salvation that you have extended to us through the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of your Son, Jesus.

COMMENTARY

| HEBREWS 2

2:1. Therefore reminded the people of the importance of the message about Jesus. The readers needed to listen because the truths of the gospel were too important to push aside. Issues of spiritual life and death were at stake. Whatever they did, the readers must hold fast to Jesus.

The idea of drifting away compared the audience to a boat sailing past warning signs to meet destruction and ruin on a rocky shore or in a raging rapid. The Hebrews needed to do something. They were listless while their situation demanded positive action. "Pay attention to your plight," said our writer, "lest you carelessly fall into ruin."

2:2. This verse moves from a truth of less importance to one of greater importance (v. 3). The fact of less importance is that violators of the Law received divine judgment for their disobedience. The message spoken by angels was the Old Testament Law. Jewish understanding associated the giving of the Law with the work of angels (Gal. 3:19). Our writer's word is that the Old Testament Law, despite its less impressive origin through angels, was still binding. God punished every violation of the Law. Violation of a single commandment brought a prescribed penalty. Those who deliberately disregarded God's Law faced death (Num. 15:30).

2:3. If even violators of the Law received punishment, how much more could those who ignored, rejected, and spurned the Lord from heaven expect judgment? Here is the more important issue. God's Son himself brought the gospel into view. Anyone neglecting to respond to its serious appeals could expect to receive God's severest displeasure.

2:4. The proclamation of the gospel was powerful of itself. Along with that proclamation God also sent signs, wonders, and various miracles to verify the Christian message. The early church saw many of these signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8). Signs which Jesus demonstrated in John's Gospel led the disciples to believe in him (John 2:11). The signs pointed to the glory of Christ.

God not only sent miracles and signs with the gospel, but he also gave the Holy Spirit to believers. Peter's Pentecost sermon pointed to the activity of the Spirit as a chief indicator of God's work (Acts 2:14–18). The work of the Spirit showed that God's new plan had dawned. The miracles and the presence of the Spirit demonstrated the superiority of the Christian gospel. Drifting away from that truth would be a foolhardy stunt.

2:5. In this section we will meet the name of Jesus for the first time in Hebrews (v. 9). The readers of Hebrews knew that Jesus was a human being and that he had lived and then endured a disgraceful death. Why should they think that Jesus was superior to any other human being, much less to the angels? Some readers might think that Jesus, the human being, was far inferior to angels in might, position, and power. This verse now shows that Jesus was superior to angels despite his humanity.

The term world to come (or "age to come") can refer either to the afterlife or to the new order of things which Jesus inaugurated. In this verse, it had more reference to a new order of God's plans which Jesus introduced. God has enthroned Jesus at his right hand. Jesus' enthronement has begun a new world order over which he reigns. In Jesus, Christians already taste the powers of the coming age (Heb. 6:5). Jesus has already started this new age, but he has not completed it. In time he will bring his people into the enjoyment of the final blessings of salvation (Heb. 9:28). Jesus is the central actor in God's new plan. He is far superior to angels. Even now he is God's messenger to us with a message of deliverance. If we listen to him, it can make the difference between eternal misery and eternal blessedness.

2:6–8a. These words represent a quotation from most of Psalm 8:4–6. Two observations will help us understand what the writer of Hebrews was doing. First, he attached great importance to Scripture. His reference to Scripture settled the issue for him. Second, the psalmist talked about the insignificance of human beings, but the author of Hebrews pointed out the majesty of the son of man, Jesus Christ.

Once we see that the term son of man in verse 6 referred ultimately to Jesus, we can spot the reference to the incarnation and the exaltation in verse 7. The phrase a little lower actually means “lower for a little while.” With this translation, the opening words of verse 7 were suggesting that Jesus experienced a temporary humiliation in the incarnation. Now the Father has exalted him to his right hand and has given him glory and majesty while subjecting everything to him. What human beings lost because of sin, Jesus has regained by his obedience. We can experience God’s fullness for us in Jesus’ accomplishments.

2:8b–9. The subjection of all things to Jesus was still in the future, but it was certain to occur. The certainty that Jesus will experience future glory gives hope to us. This assurance leads to the introduction of Jesus by name in verse 9.

We find three statements about Jesus in verse 9. First, Jesus became a human being. He was made a little lower than the angels. Second, as a man he experienced suffering and death. The death of Jesus provided a marvelous display of divine grace. God permitted his Son to endure suffering, and the Son willingly offered himself. He tasted death for everyone. Third, the outcome of the suffering of Christ was that he was crowned with glory and honor.

2:10. The death of Jesus on the cross was proper or fitting. Jews viewed the idea of a suffering Messiah as a horrible concept, but Jesus’ death fitted in with the plans of a gracious God. Whatever God does is fitting, and Jesus’ death is no exception to that principle.

God’s goal was to bring many sons to glory. God wanted to bring lost, struggling humanity to sonship. He also wanted believers to experience his glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Jesus’ death helped to accomplish this goal of sonship and glory.

In what sense did Jesus become perfect? He was already perfect in a moral sense. Making Jesus perfect refers to qualifying him to become a perfect Savior by his death. By his death God qualified him to serve effectively as the priest of his people. This allowed him to accomplish his work of redemption. Only through the death on the cross could the world gain a perfectly qualified and effective Savior.

2:14. This verse is a theological watershed. It presents two facts about Christ and his death. First, it declares that Jesus shared the same humanity with human beings. Second, it presents the reason for his death.

Jesus entered his incarnate life on earth by birth. He departed this life by death. He did not merely appear to be a human being. He genuinely shared our humanity. No one who merely

seemed to be human or who resembled human beings could meet our needs. Jesus was a real person. He can meet all of our needs.

Why did Jesus die? He died to destroy ... the devil. Jesus' death was not a defeat. It was a triumph over sin and death. Sin always causes death (Rom. 5:12). Our sin, not his own sin, caused Jesus to die. His death snatched away our sin and guilt.

2:15. Jesus has destroyed our archenemy, but he has also liberated us from our chief fear. Death still occurs. We need no longer be afraid of it. Like Satan, death has limited sovereignty. Its presence will conclude at the return of Christ with the resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15:54). This hope sets us free from the nagging fear of death which can enslave us. Death cannot separate God's people from the love of God (Rom. 8:35–39). Satan can no longer use the fear of death to intimidate us or frighten us.

Notice that Christ has not yet abolished death. He has defeated the devil who had the power of death (Col. 2:15). We still face natural death. The removal of sin by the death of Jesus withdraws the sting of sin (1 Cor. 15:55–57). One day Jesus will completely destroy death (1 Cor. 15:54). For Christians the fear of death is already gone.

2:16. This verse tells two facts about Christ's incarnation. First, Christ did not assume the nature of angels. He did not take angelic nature on himself. Probably some of the readers of Hebrews felt that an angelic deliverer would come to rescue them. Hebrews declares firmly that Jesus was not merely an angelic deliverer.

Second, Christ did assume human nature. The original language literally read that "he took on himself the seed of Abraham." As a human being, Christ descended from Abraham. He also showed by his obedience that he was a spiritual descendant of Abraham. All believers are spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

Christ became a human being to give help to us as sinners. When the Son of God humbled himself in his incarnation, he stooped lower than the position of an angel to become a human being. When he became a human being, he was able to provide for the salvation of human beings.

2:17. This verse restates the truth of verse 14 that Jesus had a complete, perfect humanity. We read two reasons for the incarnation of Christ. First, the incarnation allowed Christ to become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God. Jesus' own suffering allowed him to be sympathetic to others and thus to show mercy. He demonstrated his faithfulness by remaining

steadfast to the end without flinching. Jesus was completely trustworthy in everything God called him to do.

A second reason for the incarnation was that Jesus might make atonement for the sins of the people. Jesus' death handled the personal sins of all human beings. Jesus did in reality what the Old Testament sacrificial ritual could only do in symbols. The truth is that God himself provided the payment for our sins because of his ever-abiding love (Rom. 5:8).

2:18. This verse insists on the real humanity of Jesus. It also contains an important application of that real humanity. Because Jesus was a true human being and because he suffered, he can help us in our temptation.

Three important thoughts confront us here. First, Jesus suffered. He suffered as our Savior physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Second, this suffering became a source of temptation. The sufferings were so intense that Jesus could have decided that enduring them was not worth the pain which they inflicted. He never considered that, for he said, "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). Third, enduring suffering allowed him to help us. His victory over temptation and sin allowed him to guide us through the dangerous rocks of temptation.

Jesus has great ability to help us. His ability is not based on his experience with sin. His ability is based on his experience of the temptation to sin. Only someone who is sinless can know this experience fully. [1]

[1] Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 24–31.