

Week 2 Devotional™ Reading

A Daily Devotional on the Book of Hebrews

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Subjected for Our Sake

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, 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. But we 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. – Hebrews 2:5-9 ESV

The longer Jesus, the resurrected Messiah, was gone from the face of the earth, the easier it became for the believers living when this letter was written to forget about Him. It was a case of the old adage: out of sight, out of mind. Most, if not all, of the recipients of this letter would never have seen Jesus face to face. They would have come to faith in Him some time after His death and resurrection. And it would appear, based on the author's emphasis on drifting away, that there were those who were having second thoughts regarding either the deity or exclusivity of Jesus. They were running the risk of taking lightly what Jesus had done for them, which is why the author warned them not to “neglect such a great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3 ESV).

They say, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” but that is not always the case. And it most certainly did not seem to be the case in this instance. This entire letter is a defense of Jesus – His divinity, incarnation, mission, message, sacrifice, ascension, exaltation, and coming return. Using the Old Testament Scriptures to point the way, the writer presents Jesus as the divine agent of redemption for mankind. Quoting from Psalm 8:4-6, he writes, “You made him for a little while lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:7 ESV). Jesus, the Son of God, the creator of the universe, left His place at the right hand of God the Father and took on human flesh. He humbled Himself by becoming a man in order that He might accomplish what no man had ever been able to do: Live in sinless, selfless obedience to the commands of God.

Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. – Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT

But the author of Hebrews wants his readers to know that Jesus, while He was a man, was also fully divine. He was God in human flesh. He was the God-man. And after He had accomplished His Father's will and given His life as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, He was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit of God and returned to His rightful place at His Father's side. His time on this earth, when He was made “a little lower than the angels,” was short. As a result of

His accomplishment of His Father's will, God "crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet" (Hebrews 2:7-8 ESV). Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians:

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:6-11 ESV

Jesus may be out of sight, but He is far from out of control. And He should never be out of mind. We read that, "in putting everything in subjection to him, he [God] left nothing outside of his control" (Hebrews 2:8 ESV). Yes, it's true that, from our perspective, it would appear that some things *are* outside of His control. The world does not appear to be living in submission and obedience to Christ. But we must always remember that God's plan is not yet complete. Christ's job is not yet finished. When He said on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:20 ESV), He was speaking of His God-given mission to become the atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He had accomplished that part of His assignment. But He is not done. He is still at work. And one day He is coming back to fully complete the assignment given to Him by His Father from before the foundation of the world.

One day, everything and everyone will be under His subjection. He will rule and reign over all. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords. But we must never grow cavalier or complacent regarding His subjection on our behalf. It was His suffering that led to His glorification. "But we 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" (Hebrews 2:9 ESV). He suffered for our sake. Paul puts it this way, "He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God" (Romans 4:25 NLT). His resurrection and exaltation made possible our justification. We are right with God because Jesus satisfied the just demands of His heavenly Father. He fully paid the debt we owed with His own life. And God raised Him from the dead as proof of His acceptance of that payment. By the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for everyone, so that we might have life – eternal life.

Solidarity. Suffering. Salvation.

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. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

And again, "I will put my trust in him."

And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

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, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 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. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. – Hebrews 2:10-18 ESV

God made His Son a man. Through the miracle of conception and the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary gave birth to a baby boy whom she would name Jesus. But He was not just any boy. He was the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Trinity in human flesh. Which is why the writer of Hebrews describes Him as he "who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus" (Hebrews 2:9 ESV). He became our brother in the flesh. He became like us so that He could live among us and share our earthly experience as human beings living in a fallen world. And just a few chapters later in this same letter, we read that Jesus "understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NLT). He didn't live some kind of charmed, country-club lifestyle because He was the Son of God. In fact, it was His deity that got Him into trouble. It was His claim to divinity that brought about the greatest degree of suffering. And suffer He did. In fact, the author of Hebrews says that God made Jesus, the founder of our salvation, "perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10 ESV). Before Jesus could be perfected or glorified by His Father, He had to take the path of suffering. He experienced glorification through persecution and pain. And it's interesting to realize that Satan, when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, attempted Jesus to bypass the suffering and go straight to glorification.

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." – Matthew 4:8-9 NLT

But God's path for Jesus took Him through humiliation, rejection, pain, suffering and death. It was only after He had walked that path in faith and obedience, that God raised Him up and

glorified Him. He became flesh and blood just like us. He became one of us. All so that He could save us. "...that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV).

Not only did Jesus become one of us, He invites us to become one with Him. He extends an invitation to each and every man and woman to accept Him as their personal Savior, their redeemer. His suffering and death provided a way for men to be made right with God. Our sin separates us from God, and we are incapable of bridging the gap because even our best works on our best day are still marred by sin. We can't earn a right standing before God, but when we place our faith in the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf, we become one with Him. We are made His brothers and sisters, His fellow heirs and sons and daughters of God. But the path to our glorification, like His, includes suffering. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, become aliens and strangers in this world. We remain in it but are no longer to be part of it. That does not mean we isolate ourselves from it, but that we live in it according to a different set of standards and as if it is no longer our home. Jesus told His disciples, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NLT). The apostle Paul understood that suffering and solidarity with Christ went hand in hand. "In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind" (2 Corinthians 6:4 NLT).

But there is a purpose behind our suffering. Paul reminds us, "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love" (Romans 5:3-5 NLT). Our suffering on this earth is not pointless. It has a God-ordained purpose behind it. God is perfecting us and producing in us the very character of His Son. Suffering should not produce in us a spirit of resentment but should make us more dependent. Our weakness should remind us of our need for God's strength and assistance. Our pain should cause us to desire God's comfort and healing. Our loneliness should drive us to God for His companionship. We have a "merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" (Hebrews 2:17 ESV) – Jesus Christ, our brother. He has made propitiation for our sins, having satisfied the just demands of a holy God. But He is also making intercession for us, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and reminding Him that our sins are paid in full and our future glorification is guaranteed.

Solidarity. Suffering. Salvation. We have each of these in common with Christ because of what He has done. And we can rest assured that one day we will also share in His glorification.

...we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. – 1 John 3:2 NLT

Consider Jesus

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. – Hebrews 3:1-6 ESV

The Jews had a high regard for angels as God's heavenly messengers, sent from God. But they were nothing when compared to Jesus, the Son of God, the greatest of divine messengers with the greatest of messages. When it came to the topic of salvation, the Jews knew of no greater savior than Moses. He had single-handedly rescued their forefathers from captivity in Egypt. As a result, they held Moses in high esteem. So the author of Hebrews asks his audience to “consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1 ESV). The Greek word for “consider” means “to fix one's eyes or mind upon” (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). It would be like saying, “take a long, hard look at.” Jesus was the apostle or messenger. He was sent by God with the good news regarding salvation by faith in Him alone. But He was also our high priest, a title the author will elaborate on in greater detail later in his letter. As high priest, He offered a better sacrifice, a one-time, never-to-be-repeated sacrifice that completely satisfied the just demands of a holy God and provided complete forgiveness of sins and a way for man to be restored to a right relationship with God.

As messenger and high priest, Jesus was faithful to God. And the author compares His faithfulness to that of Moses. Moses was chosen and sent by God to the people of Israel with a message of deliverance. God had told Moses to go to the people in Egypt and tell them, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, ‘I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey’” (Exodus 3:16-17 NLT). Moses did what God commanded, although somewhat reluctantly. He obeyed God and, as they say, the rest is history. God delivered His people through the faithful leadership of Moses. And as great as Moses was considered by the people of Israel for what he had done, “Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Hebrews 3:3 ESV). Why? Because Moses was a faithful servant, but Jesus was the faithful Son.

It is important to recognize the seriousness of what is going on here. For the Jew, Moses was the founder and architect of their entire religion. While Abraham was the father of the nation, it was through Moses that they had received the Law, the sacrificial system and the tabernacle. Without Moses, they believed, they would never have escaped Egypt and become a nation. So when the author gives Jesus greater glory than Moses, he is treading on sacred ground for the

Jew. But his point seems to be that Jesus, as the Son of God, the divine messenger and high priest of the faith, has ushered in something far greater and more significant than the law, the sacrificial system or the tabernacle. And he will spend the rest of his letter expounding on and explaining why he believes that to be so.

The author makes a strong statement regarding the deity of Christ when he compares Moses, servant of God, with Jesus, the Son of God. Moses deserved honor for what he accomplished, much like a newly constructed home deserved honor for its beauty. But the real glory should go to the builder, not that which was built. Moses, though faithful, was an instrument in God's hands. None of what he accomplished would have happened without God's help. But Jesus, as the Son of God, is different, because "the builder of all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4 ESV). Jesus was divine, the Son of God and the creator of the universe. Remember how the author opened his letter? "...he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Hebrews 1:2 ESV). Jesus was not just a messenger sent from God He was God in human flesh. As such, He deserves the same degree of glory as God the Father. "The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command" (Hebrews 1:3 NLT).

Moses had helped establish the house of Israel. He had played a significant role in leading the people of God to the land promised to Abraham, their father in the flesh. But Jesus had come to establish a new household of faith, a family of God made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and based on a righteousness that comes from faith, not works. Paul referred to it as "the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). He told the Gentile believers in Ephesus, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19 ESV). The Jewish Christians to whom this letter was addressed needed to be reminded that their allegiance was no longer to Moses and the law. Their hope was not to be in the sacrificial system. They were to consider Jesus. They were now part of His household of faith. But the author warns them that they must "hold fast" their confidence in Jesus. They must boast in the hope they have in Him. There was nothing and no one else worth boasting about or placing their hope in. They were to keep their eyes fully focused on Jesus, "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2 ESV).

How easy it is to consider anything other than Jesus. We can place our hope in our religious upbringing, our spiritual accomplishments, or the fact that, at some time in the past, we placed our faith in Jesus as our Savior. But the walk of faith is always looking forward, not backwards. It is about the hope that lies ahead. It is always considering Jesus, the founder, and *perfecter* of our faith. In other words, we are always living expectantly and hopefully, trusting God to finish what He started in us. The work of Christ in our lives will not be fully complete until He glorifies us. We are works in process. And we must hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope – in Him.