

**Hebrews 2:9-18** *But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup> He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." <sup>13</sup> And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." <sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like them,<sup>[e]</sup> fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

### Welcome Home

1. To your brother
2. Who destroyed death by his death

"Welcome home!" Does this place feel like home to you? Some of you would, not doubt, answer, "Yes! This is where I am comfortable. This place feels like a warm hug." Others of you, though, might think that this place has never felt like home. Maybe, you even feel like a stranger, especially after staying away for months due to COVID. But the reality is, when we gather for worship, we are home, because we are with our spiritual family. So, welcome home.

Welcome home to your brother. *But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while.* When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed so hard that he was exhausted. The Bible says that an angel came and strengthened him. Yet he told Peter that he could ask for twelve legions of angels to fight for him. After forty days of fasting and resisting the devil in the wilderness, the angels came and attended him. Yet he could give a single command and send a legion of evil spirits out of the possessed man into a heard of pigs. How could he be so weak and so strong at the same time? Because he was both God and man at the same time. God made him a little lower than the angels. God made his Son, Jesus, who was true God from all eternity, come in the weakness of human flesh. (Charles Degner)

He came in weakness to share in our humanity. *Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.* If I were in big trouble, who would I turn to for help? My parents? There are pretty old, so probably not. My children? Luke and Amy have families of their own, so they have enough to deal with. And Daniel is way out in New York City. My wife? She is always a big help to me. But if not them? Who? My brother. He would help.

When I was young, I used to follow my brother everywhere. He was older than me and I always wanted to do what he was doing. Now, he had his friends, but he would let me tag along with them. In our little town of Leadville, Colorado, I would tag along as they walked downtown or rode their bikes out to the lake. We went sledding together and skiing together in the winter. He is a good brother so I know that I could go to him with a problem.

Now, maybe you don't have a brother like that at your home. But you do have a brother like that. *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.* He shared not only flesh and blood, but everything else that is part of our existence. He suffered humiliation. He was often disrespected. He was betrayed. He was falsely accused and unjustly condemned. He was so unpopular with people that they chose a murderer instead of him. What humiliation! What suffering! But it didn't stop there. He also shared our death. Like us, death was woven into the fabric of his life. Death hung over him just like it hangs over us.

Let's go back to that Garden of Gethsemane. Watch him in the garden. Look at his sweat dripping like drops of blood as he faced the pain of the cross. Listen to his prayer as he was about to endure hell for our sins. He faced death. He faced the fear of death. He faced the suffering of hell and he did it because he is our brother.

He went through it all because his love obligated him to take on everything that we were. Our God became our brother to share with you what you are and what you experience. We will never go through worse than him. None of

us were born in a manger. None of us were tempted the way he was by Satan. None of us had to face rejection by our heavenly Father. None of us had to carry the load of the world's sins.

No matter what you are going through in your life right now, Jesus understands. He has shared life with you. He has shared being you. He is your brother.

And your brother destroyed death by his death. *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.* Jesus became our brother, but what did we do? We sometimes doubt his love and protection. We worry about money and possessions. We often put our jobs, our money, our families ahead of God and his Word. The writer to the Hebrews said it right. Because of our sins, all our lives we are held in slavery. Because of our sins, we are slaves of fear and death.

Ancient pictures often saw life as a thread or rope. Death, to the ancients, was cutting that rope. But the truth is that death is one of the strands of that rope of life. It is part of us from the moment of our conception. It colors every aspect of our lives with a grey tint of decay. We have bucket lists because of death. We have wills because of death. We “live life to the fullest” because of death. We are in bondage to death and, to some extent, we live in fear of death, as our text tells us.

We have lost our eternity. We fear death because we have lost our eternity by sinful separation from the Eternal. We have lost our eternity beyond our ability to regain it.

But that's why Jesus became our brother. We who are flesh and blood needed a Savior-God who was flesh and blood too. Why? So that he could die for us in our place, be our sacrifice, yes, become “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He was born so that *by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.* (Peter Prange, Forward in Christ, December 2018)

And your brother didn't stop there. He not only destroyed death, but also the one who held death over us, the devil. One time in grade school a boy much older than me thought it would be fun to pick on a boy smaller than him. He tackled me from behind, held me down and rubbed my face in the snow. I told my brother. The next day, I waited for the bully to show up, but my brother was there with me. The bully never bothered me again. The devil is a bully and a terrorist. He wants to see us suffer. Death is his most powerful weapon. Jesus has destroyed death and so he also has beat up that bully who wants to terrorize us with fear.

He did that by suffering and dying in our place. That was God's plan from eternity. *In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.* The football team drives toward the goal line only to fumble the ball at the two-yard line. The next time they have the ball, they throw an interception. The game plan may have been good but poor execution by the team prevented them from reaching the goal.

God had a game plan for the salvation of the world. Jesus was sent to execute that game plan. When this verse says that he was made perfect through sufferings, it means that he completed the game plan. He reached the goal.

What does that mean for us? *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.* Jesus has been there. He has faced down death. He faced down fear. But more than that, he has conquered death. He has taken Satan's rifle called death, taken the bullets, called sin and guilt, and replaced them with blanks. Satan will keep shooting us trying to make us afraid, but we have nothing to fear. He is shooting blanks. Death is empty of its power. Your brother has taken the fear out of death.

For those of you no longer living near your parents, what happens when you go home? Food, right? When we go visit my parents, my mom is always throwing food at us. Daniel spent a summer with my parents one year while doing an internship at the University of Cincinnati. He complained that he gained so much weight that summer because my mom was always shoving food in front of him.

Our brother has food for us, too. In the Lord's Supper he connects with us intimately, giving himself to us personally. In the bread and wine, we receive Jesus' body and blood to personally assure us of forgiveness. You can't get that through a computer screen or over the airwaves. That blessing comes only by joining with your spiritual family to worship, to fellowship and to receive the Lord's Supper. If you have not been here in a while, we invite you to join us again. We hope we can welcome you home.