



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2018*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Hebrews 2:10- 18

**Subject:** Part 6 – Our Perfect Saviour

*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup> saying:*

*“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”*

<sup>13</sup> *And again:*

*“I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”*

<sup>14</sup> *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. <sup>16</sup> For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

This declaration we have just read is the bases of the Gospel and inconceivable to the understanding of any Jewish reader or listener who had not been redeemed to Christ. The same is true today and also for anyone else who is not redeemed. In the Old Testament, no Jew, religious or otherwise, were able to comprehend the idea that God could never mind would, become man. This strikes many people with the same problem, how, they ask, is this possible? For the Jews, the preaching of the Gospel was even stranger than that, for it claims that God having become man, died. How could the anointed of God, the Messiah, be the victim of death?

When the Gospel was preached to the Jews, as in Acts 17 it was always necessary to explain why Christ had to suffer and die. (v2-3)

*“Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.”*

The Cross was a serious stumbling block to the Jews, even for the converts to Christianity who also had difficulty with this issue, therefore, how could Paul say such things as we find in Romans 1:16

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”*

The Cross on its own was an extreme shame, not just for the Jew but also for their Roman occupiers. They wouldn't even talk about crucifixions in polite conversation, for it was forbidden because of its horror, its offensiveness and its humiliation. Now, considering that, then, how could Christ be greater than the angels if angels never die? How could He be the Saviour if He Himself were killed, especially in that demining way? I'm sure there were many more questions, that were lingering in the minds and hearts because we know these questions still linger in people's minds today.

Paul would declare to the believers at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

*“For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

We get some idea why it sounded foolishness and even blasphemous to them, but it was none the less true, and what's more it could be proven from the Old Testament.

Remember last week when we looked at verses 4-9, we took time to consider the debt issue created by the fall of humanity, and on account of its effects only God could and did something about it, once **and** for all. Salvation is more much more than the forgiveness of sin. It is about taking that sinner who has been battered and bruised by sin, like an old coin that has lost the perfect image, then restoring it and becoming recognisable as to whose image they hold. In fact when we consider the text we find that there are five accomplishments outlined for us in the text. Five great truths that are found no-where else outside Scripture or in anyone else, only in Jesus.

### 1 - Our Substitute

This truth and its implications, while we as believers all accept it, is actually not common knowledge for many who have been taught that salvation is works related; in fact it's a kept secret. Substitution from a Biblical perspective takes man out of the picture and rightly so, but, works righteousness has him pushing the load up hill to please God, impress God and hopefully win the award, that has been earned and deserving. Substitution strips religion, all religion of man centeredness and introduces the Perfect over the spurious.

For the Jews under the old covenant, animal sacrifice was their substitute and we see this especially in the Day of Atonement which we read about in the book of Leviticus. There were many different kinds of sacrifices. Numbers 28:3 confirms that every day two animals were offered morning and evening. There were different kinds of sin offerings, such as, the high priest had his own ritual as well as the community leaders. For example, if someone cheated another, they had to offer money equal to that amount to the priest plus one fifth, also pay the same to the person he'd cheated. So payment was exacted twice plus forty percent on top of that which was part of their atonement. Talk about not worth cheating, literally!!

So imagine when the Jews heard the fact that Jesus became our Substitute! Let me briefly rehearse the simple understanding of the gospel. Ezekiel warned that **"The soul who sins will die"** (Ezekiel 18:4). The same truth is explicit in the New Testament: **"The wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23).

Sin brings death, inevitably and without exception. Man, left to his own resource has no prospect only death. But God had another prospect, a Substitute, to take the punishment of man on Himself, to die in man's place. That was His design when God sent the second Person of the Trinity. Christ humbled Himself, came to earth, and died in our place willingly. In Scripture, there is no gospel, no good news, apart from the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Only for His dying, do we have an escape from death.

Hebrews 2:9 makes this clear. - *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."*

Man tries to exalt himself by declaring himself to be a god, even though his life span is limited. God exalted His Son by becoming a man to save us, divinity took on humanity, took on poverty, took on the rejection, took on humiliation for you and I.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life" John3:16*

We see the extent of Christ's humiliation in His death and that of death on the cross. His death was not easy or cost-less. It was a suffering death. Christ's exit from the land of the living was not calm and peaceful, but was accompanied by outward torture and inner agony. The death He tasted was the curse of sin. Historically, kings have had someone taste their food to protect them from possible poisoning. The cup of poison that belonged to us was drained to the dregs by Jesus Christ. He substituted His own death for ours and released us to live with God. It was grace, free, lovingkindness and it was fitting for Him - Hebrews 2:10;

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.*

The phrase *it was fitting for Him*, means that what God did through Jesus Christ was consistent with His character, loving and gracious. It was consistent with God's wisdom. The cross was a masterpiece of Divine wisdom as well as victory over sin and death. Though all things were both for Him and through Him, He became for a little while lower than the angels in order to bring many sons to glory and become the perfect author of their salvation through sufferings,

therefore, making it possible for us to receive what we don't deserve, *salvation*, and not getting what we do deserve, *death*. That is grace. What prompts grace? Love!

Unbounded love prompted Christ's gracious work on our behalf. Solely on the basis of His own love Jesus died. Not primarily by the hands of men or by the work of Satan, but by the determined plan and foreknowledge of God He died for our sins.

*"No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative" (John 10:18).*

The result of Christ's humiliation was His exaltation. After He accomplished the work of His substitutionary death, He was crowned with glory and honour, exalted to the right hand of the Father. There He sits on a throne from which He reigns and will reign forever. So, the writer says to his Jewish readers, and to all others who may be sceptical or scandalized: *"We do not apologize for the cross; we do not shove it under the rug, for the cross not only saves us but magnifies the Lord. Far from being anything of which we are ashamed, Christ's humiliation and death are what we glory in."* He is our great Substitute, whom we will thank and praise throughout all eternity.

The second perfection that His humiliation accomplished —

## **2. Author of Salvation**

Jesus had to become a man so as to suffer and die in order to be the perfect provider of salvation as prophesied in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. The Greek word for author is *"archegos"*, literally, a "pioneer" or "leader". In Acts 3:15 and 5:31 when the word *archegos* was used both times of Christ, it's been translated "Prince". It always refers to someone who involves others in his endeavour. For example, it is used of a man who starts and heads a family, into which others are born or married. The *"archegos"* never stood at the rear giving orders. He was always out front, leading and setting the example, just like the Lord Jesus. He is always before us, as perfect Leader and perfect Example. By His own obedience He set the perfect pattern for us. He also set us the pattern for suffering.

*"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21)*

For most people, life becomes most anxious and dreadful at the point of death, even believers can have an innate fear of it, which is why we cannot go a single step by ourselves, and we don't have too. The Author of our salvation promises us that *"because I live, you shall live also"* (John 14:19). All we have to do is put our hand in His hand and He will lead us from one side of death to the other. When we accept Him as our Saviour, we can say with the apostle Paul,

*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

As the Great Leader and author of redemption, He said in John 11:25-26:

*"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die"*

This brings us to the third accomplishment - Jesus

### 3. Our Sanctifier

*"For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise." And again, "I will put My trust in Him." And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me." Hebrews 2:11-13*

Verse 12 is a quote from Psalm 22 verse 22, and verse 13 can be cross-referenced with Isaiah 8:17 to 18 and 2 Samuel 22:3, all speaking of the Suffering Saviour.

In addition to becoming our Substitute and Author of salvation, He became our Sanctifier, the One who makes us holy. From our own perspective and experience within our lives, of course, it is difficult to think of ourselves as holy. Sin is too much within us. In thought and practice we are often far from holy. I'm sure we can all confess that practically we may not always act or react holy, yet positionally before God we are holy due to the clothes of imputed righteousness that the Lord gave us.

*"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Hebrews 10:10)

We were made holy through His sacrifice, and have become those who are sanctified. Just consider this verse *"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14).

Therefore, we are as pure positionally, as God is pure, as righteous positionally as Christ is righteous, and we are entitled to be called a brother of Jesus Christ because we now share in His righteousness. What an amazing position we have!! It may be hard to grasp, but it's true!

*Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'*

This verse from John 20 and verse 17 is amazing when you put it in context, because this chapter is the account of the resurrection of Jesus. Previous to Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus called his followers disciples and friends. But it's only after the resurrection that Jesus refers to them as brothers. The Sanctifier and the sanctified now have one Father, and the Sanctifier is not ashamed to call the sanctified His brothers. What an overwhelming truth!

How humbling to have the Son of God call us brothers and not to be ashamed of it. Conquering sin through His death, He broke sin's mastery over us and placed His eternal righteousness on us. We are "*fellow heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:17). This is the only way a person can become a brother of Christ, and therefore a child of God. We are not born into the divine family, only reborn into it which is in line with what Jesus told Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

The practical experience of a Christian's life, of course, includes sin; but the positional reality of his new nature is holiness. "*In Him [we] have been made complete*" (Colossians 2:10), Now that we are Christ's brothers, God's children, we should live like it! What a challenge!

When we realize that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and that God is not ashamed to say, "I am their God," it should thrill our hearts. And it should make us all the more conscious that it is in the righteousness of Jesus Christ that we stand and not in our own, which at best is "*like a filthy garment*" (Isaiah 64:6). Yet how strange and sad that, though God is never ashamed to call us His, we are so often ashamed to call Him ours. How often are we honestly able to say with Paul, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel?*"

Jesus, when He was in this world, learned the obedience of faith, and thereby became the perfect Saviour. Even the Old Testament revealed that Christ would put His trust in the Father. In the same passage it was also revealed that His brothers would do the same: hence verse 13 of Hebrews 2 "*Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.*" Jesus Christ is

not our Brother because of our common nature, since He is divine and we are human. For the same reason He is not our Brother because of common wisdom or power. He is our Brother because of common righteousness and common faith in the Father. What a wonderful thing to realize that when we are called to walk by faith, to submit ourselves to God and to live in total dependence on Him. We are called to follow the path that Jesus walked. John 5:19 -

*"The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner"*

Brotherhood with Jesus means that we possess His righteousness and we walk by faith as He did.

This brings us to the fourth accomplishment. Jesus is

#### **4. Our Conqueror**

*"Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." (Hebrews 2:14&15)*

The word "**share**" is from the Greek word meaning to have fellowship, communion, or partnership. It involves having something in common with others. All human beings have flesh and blood. In this we are all alike. It is our common nature. But "**partook**" is from a very different word, which has to do with taking hold of something that is not naturally one's own kind. We by nature are flesh and blood; Christ was not. Yet He willingly took hold of something which did not naturally belong to Him. He added to Himself our nature in order that He might die in our place as our kinsman redeemer and that we might take hold of the divine nature that did not belong to us - 2 Peter 1:4:

*"by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

Obviously Satan's power over us had to be broken in order for us to be brought to God. Satan's primary power over man and supreme weapon against him is death, naturally and spiritually. Sin, of course, gives Satan his power over us. So in this regard, why did Christ become man? Why did He die? That through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil which we see in verse 14 of our text. The only way to

destroy Satan was to rob him of his weapon, death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Death is the most certain fact of life. Satan knows that if men remain as they are, they will die and go out of God’s presence into hell forever. Satan wants to hold onto men until they die, because once they are dead the opportunity for salvation is gone forever. Men cannot escape after death. So God had to take from Satan the power of death.

If you have a more powerful weapon than your enemy, his weapon becomes useless. You would not fight against a machine gun with a bow and arrow. Satan’s weapon is extremely powerful. But, God has overcome this in the person of Jesus, who alone can destroyed death. The way to eternal life is through resurrection, but the way to resurrection is through death. So Jesus had to experience death before He could be resurrected and thereby give us life. Jesus’ dying destroyed death. How? He went into death, through death, and came out on the other side, thereby conquering it. Then He could say,

*"Because I live, you shall live also"* (John 14:19).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the believer with eternal life. Death is the power of Satan’s dominion. When Jesus shattered Satan’s power, He also shattered his dominion.

Which brings to us to our final accomplishment that we are looking at this morning in these verses - Jesus

## 5. Our Sympathiser

*"For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*  
(2:16-18)

Christ took on Himself the form of Abraham’s descendants and became a Jew. "How odd of God to choose the Jews," is a remark that has been sounded down throughout the ages. Many people have often wondered why He chose them and not some other race or nation on whom to show His special favour. But if He had chosen some other group, we would probably ask the same question about them. We know that He chose them in His sovereign will, out of love.

***"The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers"*** Deuteronomy 7:7-8

Once again the writer answers the question, "If Jesus is God, why did He become a man?"

We have considered that he came as a substitute for men so as to reconcile men to God, so that they can be brought into God's presence. Beyond that, He also came to help the reconciled when they are tempted. He wanted to feel everything we feel so that He could be a merciful and understanding, as well as a faithful, high priest. He came not only to save us but to sympathize with us.

In his letters to Timothy, Paul gave words of counsel and encouragement to his young friend about many things—his health, his critics, as well as his moral and spiritual welfare. But all of his counsel could perhaps be summed up in these words in the second letter:

***"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David"*** (2 Timothy 2:8).

Paul was saying, in effect, "Remember Jesus Christ in His humanity, Timothy. Remember that, wherever you may go, He has been there before you. You can get down on your knees when the going gets tough and you can pray, 'Lord, I'm having a hard time, I need help.' And He will say, 'Yes, I know what that's like and I will.'"

When you have a problem, it is wonderful to be able to talk with the Lord. He knows what life is all about, he knows our weaknesses as well as life's conflicts, he knows the battles we face and the disappointments we experience as well as our joys and accomplishments. He knows when our hearts are low, or full of guilt and shame and he knows every thought and motivation of action. Let me just sum it up by saying, Jesus knows the heart and mind of men, and nothing is new under the sun. Other people may be understanding, but they cannot fully understand. Jesus came to identify with us, to experience what we experience. Hebrews 4:15 tells us -

***"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin"***

He became our Sympathizer, a merciful and faithful high priest who can intercede for us at the right hand of the father and who has dealt with sin completely. Just think about it, He

was hungry, He was thirsty, He was overcome with fatigue, He slept, He grew, He loved, He was astonished, He was glad, He was angry, He was indignant, He was grieved, He was troubled, He was overcome by future events, He exercised faith, He read the Scriptures, He prayed, He sighed in His heart when He saw another man in illness, and He cried when His heart ached.

Jesus felt everything we will ever feel and more yet never yielded to sin. He took the full measure of every temptation that came to Him and He was victorious in every trial! What an example. What a person we can turn to when we are in need because not only can he sympathize but he can really do something about it!

This is another reason why Jesus became man. So that, He could become a merciful and faithful high priest who could sympathize with our weaknesses and who could come to the aid of those who are tempted. Ours is not a cosmic God, who is powerful and holy, but indifferent. Not at all, Our God knows why we hurt, where we hurt, when we hurt, how long it takes, just as much as he knows about our weaknesses and what tempts us, you know, the Achilles heels in our lives. He is the God we can go to not only for salvation and forgiveness but also for sympathy and help. This is our Saviour. The perfect Saviour. Our Substitute, our salvation Author, our Sanctifier, our Conqueror, and our Sympathizer. What a Saviour He is! There is that could even come close in the comparison to Jesus, He is all together lovely and altogether wonderful.

*Amen.*