

What a Brother! Hebrews 2:9-18

⁹ But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death. ¹⁰ Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings. ¹¹ For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers. ¹² He says: I will declare your name to my brothers. Within the congregation I will sing your praise. ¹³ And again: I will trust in him. And again: Here I am and the children God has given me. ¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) ¹⁵ and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham's offspring. ¹⁷ For this reason, he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

It is important in life to have role models—people you look up to; people you can learn from. Our nation has a program to help underprivileged children. It's called Big Brothers/Big Sisters. It offers young people the affection, guidance, and care that a big brother or sister would provide. Maybe you have a big brother or sister that you look up to. Maybe you are the big brother or sister. As great a sibling we might have or might be to others, the writer to the Hebrews reminds us of the greatest brother we could ever have. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. What a brother we have in Jesus. He's not ashamed to be called our brother. He came to this earth to be the ultimate brother for us all.

A lot of older brothers and sisters are not too thrilled about hanging around younger siblings. So why should Jesus want to be with us? We are creatures that lack the holiness that God expects of his children. When we enter life, there's nothing cute about us, at least not in God's eyes. We are born with sinful flesh that enslaves us to live ungodly lives that can only merit God's eternal wrath and punishment. What holy creature would even want to be seen with us? But what a brother Jesus is to us. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. He quotes Scripture to prove it. In Psalm 22 we hear, "I will declare your name to my brothers. Within the congregation I will sing your praise. And again: I will trust in him. And again: Here I am and the children God has given me." Where we lack in holiness, our brother Jesus makes up for us. We read, "For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers." Jesus made up for our lack of obedience by remaining the perfect child of God his whole life. It didn't come easy. Our text tells us, "he suffered when he was tempted." Starving from not eating for forty straight days and sweating drops like blood do not sound like easy ways to avoid sin. But he did. A couple chapters later this same author would tell his readers, "We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (4:15).

Now God credits us with holiness. It certainly is not what we have done. It's what our brother Jesus has done for us. What a brother!

Not only does he share his holiness with us. He shares everything with us. Our text tells us, "*But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death. Certainly it was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings.*" Our Lord doesn't just share his earthly life with us. He shares his glory. Martin Luther explains: "*Here is the richness of this mystery, that we are Christ's brothers, his co-heirs, children of God, kings ruling over the world, and owners along with Christ of indescribable wealth. Who can properly appreciate what it means to be a brother of Christ?*" The glories of heaven await us because Jesus is not ashamed to be our brother. What a brother!

I have the privilege of having a wonderful big brother. I'm sure it did not always thrill him to be around me. I think there were a number of occasions that I purposefully tried to annoy him. And yet when Mom and Dad told him to watch his younger brothers, (There are three of us.) he took it seriously and did it faithfully. How much more amazing that God's Son is not ashamed to call you and me his brother or sister. Even though we don't always make it easy for him, Jesus still chose to make us sinful creatures his own precious sibling. To do this, he had to supply us with holiness. That meant suffering through temptation for us. He did that so we can share his glory.

I'd like to share a quick story of my older brother Larry. Growing up on the farm there were plenty of chores to be done. One was bedding down the shed in the cow yard where the cows slept at night. The job didn't take too long. We'd spread out about twenty small square bales of straw. But one day we got into an argument about discarding the bailer twine. How foolish! But two stubborn boys felt the other should throw out the twine. Since this brother was a little faster than his older brother, my older brother decided to chase me around the farm on a tractor. When I got tired of running, I leaned up against Dad's brand-new pickup. With a sweeping move my brother tried to get me away from Dad's truck. But he forgot about the cultivator that extended out past the back wheels. And he put a nice big dent in the side of Dad's new truck. Who was to blame? Both of us were. Who took the blame? Big brother Larry did and the full blunt of Dad's wrath. As thankful as I am that my big brother took the blame for me, I'm even more grateful for my big brother Jesus. He's taken the blame for all of my sin.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us what our big brother has done with all that sin. *Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.* Already at the beginning, following mankind's first sin, God told us how he was going to defeat the one who ruined his perfect creation. The woman's offspring would crush Satan's head. But it would cost him his life. The only person big enough and holy enough to do that important job is God himself. So

when the time was just right God sent his Son into the world to destroy the devil's work. Equipping God's Son with flesh and blood through the Virgin Mary and without a human father, he entered life in a body that did not have an ounce of sin on him. He grew up as an obedient child and kept his life pure. Our text tells us, *"he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order that he would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that he could pay for the sins of the people.* So that God's Son could die to destroy the devil's work, he had to become like us. He had to become a sinner hated by God. He didn't have any of his own sin to merit that punishment. So he took the blame for everything you and I have done wrong. As a merciful and faithful high priest, he made peace between our holy God and us sinners. With one perfect sacrifice he paid for all sin. He poured out his holy, precious blood on a wooden cross. When he died the temple curtain tore in two and his grave was empty by day three. We are now assured of God's forgiveness for every sin. Your brother and mine gave his life for us. What a brother!

And the writer to the Hebrews tells us what it means to have a brother like Jesus. Now we are no longer under Satan's power. Our brother Jesus has rendered him powerless. We no longer are enslaved by the fear of death. Our brother Jesus has freed us from eternal death and made death nothing more than a sleep from which he will wake us someday. The Apostle John wrote in his first epistle: *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother"* (1 John 3:8-10). We are able to live the way God wants us to live because of Jesus. We can love our brothers and sisters because brother Jesus first loved us. And when we're tempted not to love our brothers and sisters and not to live for our God, then our brother Jesus helps us do that. Our text tell us, *"Indeed, because he suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."* The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13). We can confidently face any temptation knowing that our brother Jesus has our back. He is always there to help us. When we do fall into sin, he is right there to lift us up with the forgiveness he won for us on the cross. And he gives us strength to get through each day with all its temptations. We have the assurance of glory still to come. All of it won for us by our brother Jesus. What a brother!

I'm thankful for growing up in the family that I did. I'm thankful for the big brother I have. Despite the many times I irritated him, he still calls me his brother. As wonderful as my big brother Larry is, he's nothing compared to my big brother Jesus. When all I could do is sin, he still chooses to be my brother. He took my place in life. He took my place in death. And every day he's right there with me. He helps me through temptations and when I fail he assures me of forgiveness. Some day he'll returning visibly to earth and he's going to take me and all his brothers and sisters home to eternal glory. What a brother!