

The Crowning Glory of Suffering Death

Hebrews 2:5-9

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Introduction

Friday, June 11th, an up and coming singer from The Voice was shot dead while signing autographs. Then two days later, on Sunday morning, forty-nine people are murdered in just a few hours in a night club. A couple of days later an alligator snatches a two-year-old boy from 6 inches of water, later found dead from drowning. All three of these recent events as you probably know occurred in Orlando, Florida and they quickly remind us of the evil in this world. Immediately the media, both social and program, begin analyzing the situations, circumstances, and motives, and whatever else they can dig up and scrutinize. As more questions are answered it seems more questions are generated. How can we stop these things from happening? Who's at fault? Who is to blame? What is the solution? Do we need new laws, more screening of individuals, more barriers to separate people from the wild? We want solutions all these problems. And we should. We should seek to preserve life. We should be doing what we can to protect each other. But at its core, it is man's attempt to control what is uncontrollable. It's his attempt to bring this whole world in subjection to himself; to exercise his dominion over this world. But ultimately we can't control it all.

We are constantly trying to gain control over our own lives. And we realize that we can't. You can eat healthy, exercise daily, and keep your body clean of toxins and wake up tomorrow and find out you have cancer and there's nothing you can do about it. You could walk out this door, obey all the rules of the road and still get into a car accident and die. Travel to anywhere in the world and you will be susceptible to some sort of natural disaster.

But if you think about it, you needn't leave your home to realize how out-of-control things are. Just look inside yourself. You want to lose weight, but you can't. You continually fail again and again. Maybe you are addicted to pornography you just can't seem to free yourself. Every night or weekend you think, this is it, I'm going to stop this time, and then you fail. Maybe it's your temper. You know you have to get control of it, and you think, next time. A few moments later, your child knocks something over and you explode. Maybe you are one of those who struggle with nothing and

therefore you think, “Why can’t everyone be like me,” or “why don’t they just quit.” Your pride is painted all over your face, your reactions, and your comments and you feel no mercy for those who fail. You feel like you can’t stop those thoughts from flooding your mind. Or maybe there are some people in this room you can’t stand and are having a very difficult time loving them. You just can’t seem to find the good in them. As soon as they open their mouths contempt rises in your heart. Or someone has wronged you and you just can’t seem to forgive them. You’re supposed to, but you continually hold onto your resentment.

There are things in all of lives that we just can’t seem to overcome. You see, we want to blame others, or things, or laws, or whatever but yet we can’t even control ourselves. We can’t subdue ourselves let alone anything else in this world. This morning’s text will remind us, in spite of these situations, circumstances, and personal weaknesses, there is hope not only for today, but for the world to come. Let’s pray.

It’s been a month since we’ve been in Hebrews so I will take a moment to get us back up to speed with where we are today. In chapter one verses one through three, we were told of God’s revelation spoken in Christ, God’s reality shown through Christ and God’s redemption secured by Christ. Next, Russ preached on how Jesus was superior to the angels in so many ways. He was superior as the Son, the Sovereign, the Creator, and the Victor. Next, we were warned not to drift away and neglect such a great salvation. And this is where we land this morning in our sermon series in Hebrews and this is where I will pick it up.

Subjection of our Heavenly Home (v.5)

We begin this morning in chapter 2, and I’ll read from verse 1 in order to get a feel for the flow of the text. As I read this, see if you hear the abruptness of verse 5.

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. 5 For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.

Seems like there is an abrupt shift here doesn't it. In verse 5, we get this curve ball thrown at us, with the phrase "*the world to come, of which we are speaking.*" This verse tells us that up this point in the text, the writer has been speaking about a world to come. At first glance it is hard to see that from the previous verses in chapter 2. In order to understand where the writer is coming from we will have to back up to chapter one verses 13-14, where angels were last addressed, to help us see the flow of this text. So let's look at chapter 1:13-14:

13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

This is where angels are last spoken of. The angels are not sitting down waiting for God the Father to make their enemies their footstool. No, the angels are out ministering and serving Jesus. Chapter 2:1-4, is more of a caveat in this whole flow of thought. So, verse 5 picks up where verse 14 leaves off. What we have to see here is that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father, until His enemies are made His footstool. Jesus is sitting and waiting but He is not passively waiting but actively waiting. We know this because He is upholding the universe by the power of His word as spoken in verse 3. He is not sitting around doing nothing. But He is waiting. In the meantime, the angels are out serving Him and ministering to all of those that are His, those that are to inherit salvation. There is spiritual activity all around you at this very moment! You are being cared for by your Father in heaven and He is using all that is in His power, which is everything and everyone even the angelic beings, to bring you home to glory. If the world to come is not subjected to angels, then who will it be subjected to? The following text will answer this question as we read on.

Subjection in Creation

Our Humble Position (v.6)

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."

From this point on, we have this shift of focus from the exulted and glorified Christ, who is greater than the angels, sitting in the heavenly realms, to man, here on earth. We move downward. This is a quotation from Psalm 8 and it was originally written about man. But before we move on let me address the phrase, "*It has been testified somewhere.*" Don't get hung up on those words. It's not as if the writer does not know the name of the author of the psalm but rather that it is not important. What is more important is the author recognizes that what was written was from God. Nearly all the Old Testament citations in Hebrews are attributed to either God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Only four times are human authors mentioned (9:20; 12:21; 4:7; 2:6).

Psalm 8 is a psalm of praise to God's work in creation. Listen as I read it:

[Psa 8:1-9 NIV] 1 For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David. LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. 2 Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? 5 You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. 6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, 8 the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. 9 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

In comparison, after looking at the incredible night sky, David then looks at himself, and feels his insignificance before the majesty of almighty God. This is where the writer of Hebrews picks up the psalm. "What is man, that you are mindful of him." Compared to this vast array of incredible creation, why do you even think of him? David sees this world but not only this world but the vastness of the heavens and senses his insignificance. He realizes he has no control over this world and the heavenly realms.

Have you ever experienced this? How many of you stood at the edge of the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls and become overwhelmed with your insignificance and God's magnificence. The ocean does this for me. I look out at that vast body of water and it gets to me. I think there are places on this planet, specifically in this ocean that we have not explored yet. For others it's the mountains. Some of us can look at the starry sky in the dessert feel that same thing as David does here. God's magnificent creation speaks of His glory. Paul states in Romans 1:20:

20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

But not only is David amazed that man is being thought of, or remembered, but that God is also caring for him. Who are we, oh God, that you would care for us? That you would even sustain our lives. He is looking at himself, or mankind, and thinking the God of heaven is caring for this creation as a mother cares for an infant and why is he? He doesn't need us. We are but tiny ants in this world and yet He is caring for us. We need Him. David realizes just how dependent he is upon the Lord. God cares for us and in His mercy, He sustains us. We are in subjection to Him whether we acknowledge it or not.

[Our Original Design \(v.7-8a\)](#)

Even in the midst of our smallness, and compared to all of creation, from this earth to the farthest reaches of the universe, God had a plan for man. He had an original intention in the creation of this world and specifically for man. As this psalm points out, man was created just below in position of the angelic beings. Yet, that is not what makes us unique according to this psalm. For we are crowned with glory and honor. This glory and honor that the psalm is alluding to is from Genesis 1:26:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

We were made in His image. Each and everyone one of us bear His image. No matter what you look like or what you have been born with, you still bear His image. Stained with sin, yes, but every single man and woman and child bears the image of the creator God. We see our uniqueness in many ways. We are unique in our capacity to create, invent, and reason. Just look around at what we can do and make. Where we are today compared to where we were 100 years ago is astonishing. You can't say the same thing about birds right? Birds make the same nests they made since the beginning of creation. Man on the other hand, continues to create incredible structures.

We are unique in our social interaction. Even though there still exists at various levels of ethnic and social racism, humans are still able to coexist and even get along pretty well in spite of our differences. Friendships are developed every day that cross all social, racial, and ethnic lines. Again You don't see this with animals. Different kinds of birds are not building nests together in one tree developing this versatile nesting community nor are they building communities with other types of animals or reptiles.

We are also unique in our morality. Humankind in general, all agree that taking one's life is murder and needs to be punished. We all have a sense of right and wrong. Not necessarily so with animals. We don't see them creating societies with moral boundaries and laws.

Not only are we image bearers, but we were given a specific responsibility. God originally designed us to have dominion over His creation. Creation was to be in submission to us! And then we were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with His image bearers, or fill the earth with His glory. That was the original plan. We were to rule over all of creation.

Subjection Ruined (v.8b)

This world was supposed to be subjected to us but sin has entered into it and now we have lost our original position. Every single moment of every day is evidence of the Fall. This is why we struggle so hard to exercise dominion of the earth. But when we look around this is definitely not what we see right. The author recognizes this.

“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.”

Here is the hint to what awaits us. The original dominion was lost but it will be restored. Man will once again, have dominion, control, over every square inch of the world. Right now, we don't see this. Man is not in control. He does not have dominion over everything. Why? Because of Genesis 3. The first Adam had it all, he had absolute dominion. He was alive in this paradise with complete dominion over all of God's creation, yet under God's authority and in His very presence. But it took only but a moment to utterly destroy the original plan of creation. And in that moment, everything was lost. And the result of his rebellion, as scripture states, “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” This was the crowning glory of punishment of man's rebellion. This would be the curse that befalls upon all men, death. This is why everything happened in Orlando that week. This is why we see all this turmoil every day in our lives and in the lives of others. We live our lives in this sin laden world struggling to control and yet feeling like we are losing the battle every single day. This is the climax of the Fall. No one will escape death, unless of course He returns. We may not all face cancer or natural disasters or tragic accidents but we will all face death, we will all die. This is exactly what the world works so hard to avoid. What is the answer? More laws? More walls? Or do we just hide in our homes? Where is our hope?

Subjection Restored

9 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.

We may see this world and then question who is in control but the author of Hebrews clearly tells us where to direct our eyes. But we see him, namely Jesus! The one who is over all of creation, was made for a short time, lower than the angels. He stepped off His throne, humbled himself, became a man, entered into our sin laden world. The one whom all things are subjected to, subjects himself to this world. Now look at how He is crowned. We were crowned with glory and honor by bearing His image and given authority and dominion over all of creation but He is crowned in glory and honor in

His suffering of death. Why would that be His crowning glory? Because this is the curse that was defeated. He had to become man and bear the wrath of God in order to redeem those from the curse. "So that, by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." He did what man could not do. The one who reigns over this world brings himself in submission to this world. He becomes the 2nd Adam. He is crowned with glory and honor but not because He bears the image of God but because He is God who became man!

[Gal 3:13 ESV] 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

Christ did not enter into our world to make this world His kingdom but rather to exercise His power and authority over sin and death for those who will be in His kingdom that is to come in the new heavens and new earth. He became sin for us so that we may become children of God and thus inherit this great salvation in which He reigns over. [1Co 15:55 ESV] 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" This is the great salvation we are not to neglect and to keep our eyes fixed upon. The beginning of chapter two spoke of what we were saved from and these verses tell us what we are saved for. We will reign in the new heavens and the new earth in the world to come where our dominion will be restored. The world to come will be subjected to us. But, less we forget, it was Christ who obtained this great salvation for us therefore keep your eyes on Him, the author of our salvation.

Reflect and Respond

Remember, there is a world to come. There will be a new heavens and there will be a new earth. And in the meantime, Christ is using everything in His power to bring you home. Do you keep your eyes on that truth? If all of the angelic beings are here to serve Him, then what are you worried about?

Secondly, do you take time to ponder God and His creation? Do you take time to humble yourself before our great God and king? Or are you too proud to think humbly of your existence?

Thirdly, where do you seek your help? When things seem out of control or they are out of control in your life, where do your eyes look to? And if it's not Christ, then ask yourself why.

Take comfort, one day, we will reign over the new heavens and earth. One day we will judge angels. One day all will be made right. One day, we will reign as kings and queens in the new earth. So don't

become angry with those who persecute you, or ridicule you, rather, see them as lost and destined for the wrath of God. They are the ones who have the future to fear.

Finally, remember, as we struggle with our own flesh and blood, Christ has done what we could not do in order to give us the power to do what we can't do without Him.