



Conducted by
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“Please comment upon Hebrews 2:10; “For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,” dealing especially with the latter part – “...to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

IN Hebrews 2, from the first verse to the verse before us, we are reminded of the danger of neglecting the “great salvation”, spoken first of all by Christ, to whom (and not to angels) this new dispensation is subjected; and that this Christ was, for a time, humbled below the angels and that this humiliation took place by Divine necessity for our salvation.

“For it became him...”

The writer to the Hebrews informs us, and the Jewish Christians to whom the epistle was directed, that God found it necessary to humiliate Jesus to bring “many Sons to glory”. It may be that some were critical of the fact that Jesus lived a humble life and eventually died an ignominious death. They had no doubt expected greater things of God’s Messiah. They had looked perhaps for military conquest and an all-conquering hero. In John 12:34 we read of what the people thought: “The people answered him (Jesus). We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” They also had read in the law, that the Kingdom of the Messiah was an everlasting one and that Christ’s reign was one without end. Thus the writer affirms that it was necessary and becoming of God that Jesus should “taste death in bringing many sons to glory”. It was necessary. Jesus was not a soldier, He was a Saviour.

“...for whom are all things and by whom are all things...”

This is a reference to God’s omnipotence.

“...in bringing many sons unto glory...”

(i.e. in securing the salvation of mankind). The heirs of salvation are here referred to as “sons” in view of their relationship to God “the Father”, just as in the following verse they are referred to as “brethren” in view of their relationship to Christ (“He is not ashamed to call them brethren”). To bring many sons to glory is the same as bringing them to heaven and life everlasting. The phrase envisages *many* sons being brought to glory. Rev. 7:9,10 speaks of a vast “multitude which no man could number”.

"...the captain of their salvation..."

An obvious reference to Jesus, as leader or commander of the great army of the redeemed. Jesus is the "Prince of life" (Acts 5:31) and the "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

"...perfect through suffering..."

The New Testament repeatedly establishes a link between suffering and glory. For example Paul, in 2 Tim. 2:10, says, "Therefore I *endure all things* for the elects' sakes, that they may also obtain the *salvation* which is in Christ Jesus, with *eternal glory*." All the personal sufferings and privations which Paul endured were willingly submitted to so that he might bring the salvation by the gospel to all men, and bring them to glory. Nothing is achieved without cost and effort. This is seen even to much greater effect when we consider what Jesus endured in bringing many sons to glory. Suffering brings men to perfection and strengthens personal character. One could wax poetical on the subject. Pearls are only obtained because of the fact that an irritating grain of sand gets into the oyster shell, causing suffering. Fine steel is obtained only because of the melting heat and the battering on the anvil. Fine gold is obtained because of the refiners fire. Malachi talks of God sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver, purging His sons in the crucible of trials, temptations and suffering. (Malachi 3:2).

One, however, may wonder in what sense Jesus could have been made perfect by suffering. Was not He the sinless son of God? If He had not suffered are we to believe that He would not have been perfect? In what respect then was Jesus perfected by suffering?

To most individuals the word "perfect" or "perfection" when used in reference to people means *moral perfection*, and is used of one who is of flawless character. This is not however, the meaning of the word "perfect" in Heb. 2:10. Jesus was not made *morally* perfect by suffering. He was morally perfect *in spite* of His temptations and sufferings. The word used in Heb. 2:10 means *complete*, wanting in nothing. The Greek word used in the original literally means "complete". The same word is used in John 17:20-23, where Jesus describes the *complete* (perfect) unity which existed between Jesus and God, and prays that that the same oneness (unity); may also be complete (perfect) between Jesus and His disciples. Thus morality or character perfection has nothing to do with Heb. 2:10. Jesus was made *complete* through suffering. Complete in what sense? Complete in the sense of being *fully qualified* for his position as Saviour of mankind. The sufferings (and death) of Jesus *fully qualified* Him "to lead many sons to glory". Many titles and descriptions can be attributed to Jesus, such as prophet, priest, king, advocate, prince, captain, counsellor, shepherd and many others; but amongst them all He was essentially our Saviour. As a *Saviour* He had to accomplish our salvation by His actions and by His sufferings. He is our Saviour because He *did* something for us. He died in our stead, that we should not taste of death. "By His stripes we are healed." *His sufferings* were endured on our behalf. He had of necessity as a perfect (complete) Saviour to sojourn amongst men. But *angels* have sojourned amongst men. Better still then, not simply to sojourn amongst men but to become a man. He became flesh, became a human being and suffered at the hands of men. The humanity of Jesus, then, allowed Him truly to be tried and tempted in all points as we are. It is said that no man is fully qualified to administer to the sick and afflicted, unless he himself has drunk deep from the cup of human sorrow. Jesus drank of the cup to its very dregs. Paul in Col. 1:21,22 says to the Christians at Colosse, "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled *in the body of his flesh* through *death*, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." Again, regarding Jesus's voluntary humiliation of Him-

self, Paul says (Phil. 2:4-8) that although Jesus thought it not robbery to be called equal with God, He, "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Thus Jesus took upon Himself the limitations and frailties of humanity, but more: He died the death of the flesh. Jesus tasted death. This was all involved in Jesus being made perfect through suffering. Indeed the very next verse (Heb. 2:11) says, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one: for which course He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Thus both Jesus and His disciples are one (humanity) and Jesus (being made flesh) is prepared to describe His disciples as "brethren". Continuing the theme, we read in v.14 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

What conclusions can we reach therefore on this 'phrase "made perfect through suffering"?

(1) We noticed that the word "perfect" had no reference to moral excellence but rather meant *completeness*, thoroughly furnished to His work as Saviour.

(2) His sufferings were only possible because of His humanity. These closing verses of Hebrews 2 confirm this. He became man that He might die a human death and have opportunity to confront, conquer and destroy him that had the power of death, the devil (v.14).

(3) By conquering death through His own death Jesus released men from a lifetimes bondage to the fear of death (v.15)

(4) By His suffering on the cross and the shedding of His blood Jesus took men's sins away. Jesus could have died in many ways: He could have been poisoned, drowned, starved to death or put to death in some other way, but He had of necessity to die a violent death so that his blood would drain from His body. Truly His sufferings made Him the complete Saviour.

(5) Only by becoming man and "partaking of flesh and blood" was He able to call His disciples "brethren" (v.11). "Both He that sanctifieth (Christ) and they who are sanctified (His disciples) are one" (humanity). Only by Christ's becoming man and suffering as man could this relationship be achieved. This was why "He took not on Him the nature of angels but took on Him the seed of Abraham" (v.16).

(6) "It behoved Him thus to be made like unto His brethren (men) that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest" (v.17) Having been subjected to all the trials and temptations which beset men Jesus can now be a *merciful* Saviour, for as verse 18 puts it: "in that He himself *hath suffered*, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

These then are some thoughts on the latter part of Hebrews 2, on this question of Christ's being perfected as a Saviour, through His humiliation and suffering. These points do not in any way exhaust the matter and most brethren will be able to think of other ways in which Jesus was made "perfect through suffering".

What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus our Lord!

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