

In the name of Christ Jesus, dear friends:

In some respects, the book of Hebrews is shrouded in mystery. For one thing, we don't know who the author is. People anywhere from Paul to Apollos or even Barnabas have been suggested. For another thing, we don't know to whom the letter is written. The content of the book leads us to believe that it was addressed primarily to Jewish Christians, people who were familiar with the Old Testament and its rites and ceremonies. That is why it is called the letter to the Hebrews. But we don't know for sure.

What we do know for sure, and what is really important, is the purpose of the book: the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. No one else, nothing else is needed. Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus is the theme that runs throughout.

Now this letter was written for Jewish Christians of the first century, but the message is just as meaningful for us, Gentile Christians, still celebrating the season of Christmas, in the 21st century. We still live in a world that questions the claims of Christianity. We still live in a world that may be willing to admit that Jesus was a real person, a wise teacher, even a moral example, but nothing more. We still live in a world that may be willing to concede that Christianity holds some moral and ethical value for society, especially this time of year, but it is no better than any other item on the smorgasbord of world religions.

For these reasons, the timeless truths expressed in this letter are more important than ever. Don't let the world tell you that one religion is as good as the next. Don't let anyone try to convince you that all spiritual paths lead to the same place. Don't let the devil discredit your Savior or your salvation. Instead, take the time to find what God says in his Word. Focus your eyes on the clear picture of God's Son. **Fix Your Eyes on Jesus.** And as we do so, please...

The text begins: **But we look to Jesus (9).** It begs to be asked: do we? Do we still **look to Jesus?** Do we see Jesus in our lives? Certainly, the world around us isn't getting any better. Our nation is becoming more and more unchristian, maybe even antichristian. To the unbeliever and maybe even to some believers, evidence of Jesus is pretty hard to find.

The writer of Hebrews would probably even agree...to a point. In the verse that immediately precedes our text, he talks about Jesus' control over all things. Everything has been **put...in subjection under his feet.** (8) But he also acknowledges that **at the present time we do not yet see everything in subjection to him (9).** In fact, we see the opposite: we see selfishness, greed, lust, hate, pride, and that's only what is in our *own* hearts. We look outside our own hearts, and the picture doesn't improve. We see people enslaved by sin. We see a world lost in itself. We see countless lives spinning out of control toward the Day of Judgment.

Keep in mind, the writer of the Book of Hebrews may have never seen any of Jesus' miracles. It is unlikely that he was one of Jesus' original disciples. Yet he could still say with confidence: **But we look to Jesus (9).** And we see him too. Not just in the manger, not just as a good story to tell the kids, not just as a "great guy" from long ago, but as he reveals himself to us in His Word: the picture of a humble servant.

We look to Jesus, **the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while...now crowned with glory and honor (9).** You see, Jesus always was and always will be true God. But Jesus humbled himself when he became a human being. Jesus set aside his divine glory. Jesus muted his divine power. In that sense, he **was made lower than the angels for a little while.**

And humble *is* the right Word to describe Jesus' entrance into the world: born to poor parents, born in a barn, born far from home. And humble is also a good way to describe Jesus' life: He wasn't too proud to associate with the outcasts of society; he ate

with tax collectors and sinners; he wouldn't allow his followers to make him an earthly king because he didn't come to rule - he came to serve; and Jesus' attitude of humble service was never more clearly in focus than on Good Friday.

Yes, even during the Christmas season, our eyes are still drawn to Calvary. There we fix our eyes on that middle cross. We fix our eyes on a man who was being punished even though he did nothing wrong. We fix our eyes on Jesus who suffered the most humiliating kind of death so that **he might taste death for everyone (9)**. We fix our eyes on Jesus who died to save all people, no matter who they were or where they came from or what they had done. And as we gaze upon on that cross, it is clear that the person who humbled himself wasn't doing it for his own glory or praise. He did it for you. With eyes of faith, God allows you to see that this humble servant is also your complete Savior...

...your perfect Savior. Listen to v.10: **Certainly it was fitting for God...to bring the author of...salvation to his goal through sufferings**. In order to understand this verse, it is helpful to look at the original Greek. Jesus is called the "author" of our salvation. Other translations use the word "pioneer." That word creates a picture in our minds. Jesus pioneered our salvation. Jesus blazed the trail to heaven. He is our complete Savior because he won our salvation from the very beginning...without our help... in spite of our sin...only through his love and mercy...and brought it to completion.

That idea of completion is found in the word **goal** in our text. He reached his **goal through sufferings**. The Greek word here contains the idea of following through, or bringing something to completion, or staying with a job until the end. In that sense, Jesus is our complete Savior. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Jesus was the catalyst of our salvation. And he when said: **"It is finished,"** it was **finished**. And because he has brought our salvation to

completion, he is now proud to be called our brother.

Again, listen: **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 (11)**. Because Jesus was born into the world as a human being, there is a common bond between the Savior and those he came to save. Because Jesus suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Because Jesus felt the full weight of the world's sin on his shoulders, he is uniquely qualified to go to God on our behalf. We are members of the same family. Jesus is your brother.

But how often do you think about your relationship with Jesus in those terms? Have you ever told some one else that Jesus is your brother - I'd like to tell you about my brother, Jesus? If not, why not? Is it because we have a hard time thinking of ourselves as saints, as those made holy through Christ, and therefore, in God's eyes, equal with Christ and members of his family? Is there a reason for that?

Is there maybe a sin from your past that still bothers you, a sin from like years ago, a sin that just won't go away? In your head, you know you are forgiven. You know that Jesus died for that sin too, but what your mind is able to comprehend is difficult for your heart to accept.

Let me assure you that Jesus is not ashamed to be called your brother. Jesus loves you. Jesus died for you. And as far as he is concerned, that sin is gone.

Maybe you are still carrying some emotional baggage from a previous relationship. Maybe there are some questions that still haunt you. Could I have done any more? Could I have done something differently? What can I do now? And you are having a hard time dealing with unresolved guilt.

Jesus is not ashamed to be called your brother. He took your sins to the cross. He has buried them forever. You can sleep peacefully at night with the assurance of complete forgiveness in Christ.

Maybe it's not one thing that keeps pulling you down. Maybe your most difficult challenge is living as a Christian from one day to the next. You know what God *expects* of you. You know what your life is *actually* like. And it is not an uplifting experience to compare the two.

Jesus is not ashamed to be called your brother, either. In fact, Jesus is proud to be your brother. Not because you measure up. Not because of the great things you do for God. Jesus is proud to be called your brother because of the great things he has done for you. Jesus puts you on his level because he stooped down to raise you up. Because he has made you holy, you are now brothers and sisters *through* Christ. Because he has made you holy, you are now brothers and sisters *in* Christ. Because he has made you holy, you are now brothers and sisters together *with* Christ.

Do you remember those pictures that were popular a few years ago? I haven't seen any lately, but they used to be in all the malls. They were called "Magic Eye" pictures, or more officially, stereograms. You were supposed to just stand a certain distance from the image and fix your gaze at this mass of unidentifiable colors and shapes in a frame. All of a sudden your eyes were supposed to adjust and the picture would come into focus...at least for some people.

I think much of the frustration with the "Magic Eye" pictures is the same problem many people have with the Bible today. They might have a general idea, a fuzzy notion, about what the Bible says, but they don't truly know what God's Word is really all about. They don't want to fix their gaze on Jesus and know him for the God-man he truly is.

But a text like the one we focused in on for today helps us to stand in the right spot, fix our gaze, and clearly see the beautiful picture to be found on this and every other page of Scripture. Because, from cover to cover, God's Word reveals the life and work of Jesus. Whenever we read our Bibles, we are not only looking at words on a page. We are fixing our eyes on Jesus: our humble

servant; our complete Savior; and by grace, our very proud big brother. Amen.

