

Week 4: FORMED Series

Following Jesus in Humility and Suffering

Hebrews 2:5-9

⁵ *It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:*

*"What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?"*

⁷ *You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honor*

⁸ *and put everything under their feet."*

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The Text

So Far... "in Hebrews the author has maintained a persistent focus on the exalted status of the Son of God. In 2:5–9, however, that focus shifts to his incarnation, a passage crafted specifically to move the discussion from the Son's heavenly position to his earthly ministry... [it] may be divided roughly into two parts: (1) an introduction followed by the quotation of Psalm 8:4–6 (vv. 5–8a), and (2) an interpretation of the psalm's meaning (vv. 8b–9)."¹

*"Although the listeners are about to share in the inheritance of the Son (1:2, 4, 14), they are in danger of neglecting the "great salvation" (2:3). Despite the claim of the psalm that God has "put all things in subjection under his feet" (Ps 8:6; Heb 2:8a), the community "does not see all things in subjection to him" (2:8b). That is, the reality of the readers' lives is a severe test for the community's claims. As inhabitants of a hostile world who have faced imprisonment and the confiscation of their property (cf. 10:32–34), they "do not see" the ultimate triumph of God described in chapter 1. Because the promises remain unfulfilled, the community faces the severe crisis of faith that the author hopes to alleviate in the exposition that follows. They face the cognitive dissonance between the faith claim that is stated in chapter 1 and the reality of discouragement and defeat that they experience, for they continue to experience suffering and the fear of death (cf. 2:15). Thus their most basic question is **"How does one claim the sovereignty of Christ over the world in the midst of suffering?"**"²*

¹ George Guthrie, *Hebrews* (Zondervan Academic, 2009), pg 96.

² James Thompson et al., *Hebrews, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2008), pg 69.

This week's sermon:

The author of Hebrews is believed to be addressing the lived experience of the first century audience: If Jesus is at the right hand of the father and everything is subject to him, why do we still have to deal with suffering in this life? This question is still relevant today. In fact the existence of suffering is one of the reasons many people give for not believing in a loving, all-powerful God.

Bec shared the illustration of a broken mirror. It was designed to perfectly reflect, however through the cracks, it only partially reflects – and what it reflects is distorted.

God created this world and humanity to dwell with Him and reflect His glory. Yet sin has cracked the mirror and now we can see some of the glory, but it's distorted. We live in the tension of the "already and the not yet" of the kingdom of God.

As the Epistle to the Hebrews continues we see how Jesus intervened, becoming a man (fully God and fully man), suffering and providing the means of restoration.

⁹But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Bec's encouragement to us was:

"We do not see everything, but we do see Jesus"

So, when pain, suffering or uncertainty clouds our vision and doubt creeps in, we fix our eyes on the one who entered our brokenness, bore our pain, and promises to make all things new. If we want to know what love looks like we look to Jesus.

Reflection:

- Have you ever asked the question: why is there pain and suffering if Jesus won and is reigning? OR have you ever had someone ask you that question?
 - What is your answer...?
- Bec used the image of a broken mirror — it still reflects, just not perfectly. Where do you see glimpses of God's glory and goodness even through the cracks of a broken world?
- Are there any areas of your life or the world around you that feel particularly 'cracked' or broken right now?
- The author of Hebrews wrote to a community who had experienced imprisonment and the loss of their possessions, yet were called to hold onto their faith. Is there a gap between what you believe about God and what you are currently experiencing? How does that tension sit with you?
- How might you intentionally focus on Jesus even in the midst of the brokenness, pain and suffering?

Prayer:

Jesus, we confess that there is much we do not see or understand, and that the brokenness of this world can shake our faith. Thank you that you did not stay distant, but entered into our suffering, tasting death so that we might have life. When doubt clouds our vision, turn our eyes back to you, the one who authored and perfected our faith. Help us by your Spirit as we live in the tension of the already and the not yet, and remind us that the story is not over. Amen.

Formation Practice

We want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or an hour, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

Simple Daily Rhythm

1. Listen: Read a short passage from Hebrews
 - Free yourself from distractions (internal and external). You may find it helpful to play a worship song to focus your mind
 - Read slowly. Read the passage a few times.
 - [Lectio Divina](#) a one helpful method of reading and sitting with a passage.
2. Reflect: What is Jesus saying to me?
 - Pray and ask Jesus to speak to you. Sit in the quiet and listen. Is he asking you to do anything?
3. Respond: What will I do today?
 - Resolve to intentionally do something with what you have been given. There may be a practical step of obedience to take. Or you may be able to encourage someone else with what you have been given.