

Bible e-Study on the book of Hebrews (2)

No Flesh...No Salvation

“14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Hebrews 2:14-15

NUGGET – We all have had times of sadness and sorrow over when we try, strive and seek to be good and fail. Some may remember the old Flip Wilson show that had the Geraldine skits that ended with the line “*the devil made me do it.*” We sometimes feel that way don’t we? If only the devil would leave us alone, if only our flesh wasn’t so weak, if only I was free of this human body I’d be a better person.

But think about what the flesh is and achieves. Flesh does and acts, it works and moves. Flesh is substance and flesh is life. We also know that flesh can be lead into temptation. And flesh can die. It is all these qualities together that we experience and live in and through. It is also these qualities that give us pause when we consider what the writer of Hebrews is saying. That God took on human flesh.

One the surface that seems to make sense, if you’ve been a Christian for a while. But when you stop to consider what you know from your experiences in the flesh how can a God, who is limitless and all-powerful, be confined in weak, frail and mortal flesh? Not only does it make no sense, it also seems ‘unseemly’. After all we *know* what weaklings we are, do we want a God who is just as weak and tempted to failure as we are? If that’s God, what good is He if He’s no better than me?

And there’s the clue to doubt isn’t it? Is God better than me? Really and truly? Does He possess what I don’t? The answer, of course, is yes! Jesus, being truly God, possesses what I don’t, perfect love and obedience. He can be what I am, He can, as the nugget verse says, share in my humanity and yet remain free of the stain of sin. But that only happens through His perfect human obedience. That is how He has mastered the flesh. So while He is God, He is also fully and wholly human. He has all the flesh and blood we do, He has endured all the temptations we do, He has suffered all the pains and sorrows we have suffered in the flesh, and He has yet remained perfect in His obedience. Even to death (see vs. 9).

And it only by His flesh that He is able to break the power of the devil. Consider that, without His coming in flesh, Jesus would not have been able to defeat Satan to gain salvation for us. By His defeat of death He has freed us from our fear of weakness, failure and mortality. He has accomplished perfect obedience for us. In one sense Geraldine was right, the devil “*made*” Jesus do what He did, but only in so far as, if Jesus wanted to defeat him, Jesus had to become fully human. That He did, and in His perfect obedience in the flesh to His Father in heaven, we have been given perfect freedom through salvation.

APPLICATION -

1. That idea of obedient living is something we Lutherans don’t often talk about, we focus on the grace of God won for us by Jesus on the cross and that’s good. We should also remember that in His grace He frees us to be obedient without fear of failure. We can’t fail, because He didn’t. He did that in our place. So we can choose to be obedient. Find one area of life where you have wanted a better obedience to God’s Word and take one day to focus on that. Knowing you are forgiven when you fail, you can’t go wrong. Give yourself permission to improve your obedience in that one area and see how it goes. Then try a second day too.

PRAY – Lord God we thank you that Your Son accomplished perfect obedience in the flesh and defeated the devil. Grant us the joy of knowing He did that so we might live in Your perfect love, free of fear. In Jesus name, amen.