

Living the Imperfect Life

February 21, 2021 - Hebrews 2:5-9

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I have struggled at times with something called perfectionism. It is that tendency to try to make everything perfect before experiencing peace. You try to be perfect, do everything perfectly and attain the perfect life. When you write this down on paper, we can see the craziness of such an approach. Perfectionism is a ticket to endless struggle, anxiety, and stress for rare moments of peace.

Yet though we may or may not have struggled with perfectionism, we all have to live a less than perfect life. We may struggle with our personal imperfections. When we fail, we ruthlessly condemn ourselves. Or we may expect perfection of others. When they fail, we pounce on them with all they did wrong, even if it was a small thing. We have imperfect relationships or marriages. We may struggle because others have the seemingly perfect spouse or partner.

Or we may struggle with some incompleteness in our lives. The house renovations still aren't done. We have arrived at a certain age and we still don't have a love relationship, or we're not yet married. We're not as far as we thought we'd be in our career. Our business is not where we thought it would be.

We may struggle because of the imperfections in our family.

Maybe our son or daughter is not doing what we hope or believed they could do. Or maybe you are a son or daughter who wants to go one way in your life. But your parents think you should go another way. Or some see their kids in a difficult marriage or situation. The parents struggle with what to say or what to do.

As Christians, we turn to God to deal with some of these realities. We appeal for His help to smooth out the imperfections. We ask for His help to move things forward or open doors. Sometimes, He does and we get that taste of progress.

But sometimes he doesn't. A young mother contracts cancer. Her children need their Mom's guidance through life. A whole church prays for her healing. Yet she dies. We go through a tough time in our mental health with winter, the darkness, the pandemic and the isolation. We call out to the Lord for help and He seems completely silent. Christians suffer persecution today for their faith. They get beaten, arrested and imprisoned for years. No relief seems to arrive. Jesus' promise of whatever you ask for in prayer, in mark 11:24 almost seems mocking. The silence of God adds to our imperfect life. In a perfect world, there would be no barrier of communication between us.

So how do we live with imperfection in our lives, in our world and even in our relationship with God? That's what we're going to try to answer today as we continue in our series on Hebrews. Last week, we saw the writer display the Son's superiority over angels. We learned that we need to recognize the absolute supremacy of the Son over the universe and over our lives. The writer paused from his discussion about the Son and angels to exhort us to pay much closer attention to the Son. Following this, he goes back to this comparison between the Son and angels. In this section we will find out how to live as an imperfect person in an imperfect world. By the end of our time together, you will have two actions you can take to address the struggle of living with imperfection.

To do that we're going to read Hebrews 1:13-14 and then skip down to read Hebrews 2:5-9 which is our main text for today.

Hebrews 1:13-14; 2:5-9 (ESV)

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?

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

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. 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.

In 1:13, the writer quotes Psalm 110:1 – A Psalm about the Messiah as promised one "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." This was widely understood to be God speaking to His servant, the Messiah. God would place all things under the feet of the Son. So He gave the Son the supreme place of honor and authority in the universe. Back in Hebrews 1:3 we read, "he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." So God gave the Son this position of highest honor in the universe.

The writer of Hebrews points out that God never said this to an angel. Then in verse 14, He says "angels don't rule. They are ministering spirits sent out to serve God's people." So they serve under the reign of the Son.

He continues, this angel/Son talk in chapter 2 verse 5. He further emphasizes the superiority of the Son to angels. "For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are

speaking.” This may not mean much to us. But to a Jewish reader, it could mean a lot.

They believed that the angels did have some sort of rule on earth. They got this from two places in their Scriptures. One was Deuteronomy 32:8 – It says “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.” Angels is one interpretation of sons of God. So somehow angels had a relationship to the government of the nations. Then in the prophet Daniel, we see references to the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece. Each one was some sort of high angel overseeing that nation in some way. So they believed angels had some sort of earthly responsibility.

But Hebrews 2:5 makes it clear that no angel had received the supreme authority over the world to come. “It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come.” “The world to come” is a common Jewish expression for the future age when all God’s purposes in salvation will be fulfilled. So that world to come is the perfect world. God did not subject this world to angels.

Instead, he would place everything under the feet of the Son. This is Good News. **God has put everything in subjection to Jesus. (Heb.2:5-8a).** He uses verses 6-8, to prove this he quotes Psalm 8.

Now we might stumble a little over that first phrase in verse 6. “It has been testified somewhere or somewhere in the Scriptures it says.” It seems like the writer doesn’t know where this quote comes from. The writer is not careless in his references or ignorant about the authorship of Psalm 8. To him, every part of the Scriptures comes from God. Since it is God’s word, there’s no need to highlight the human author or reference point. He uses the Psalm to point out a man who has a lower status than the angels. But this status was only for a little while. Then God crowns this man with glory and honor along with putting everything in subjection under his feet. So the writer applies Psalm 8 to speak about the Son. Notice “putting everything in subjection under his feet” connects back to the “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

But then in the second part of Hebrews 2 verse 8, he puts a double emphasis on this point. “Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.” Well, duh! Of course it means that. That’s what he’s been saying since the beginning of this letter. The exalted Son is the supreme ruler of the universe. We looked at the Son’s qualifications for the highest seat of honor in the universe in verses 1-4. He is over all kingdoms; all countries; all people; all

creatures; all humanity; all the spiritual world. He is the perfect fulfillment of Psalm 8. He reigns supreme over the universe right now.

But why does the writer put this double emphasis on everything being subject to the Son at the very end of verse 8? Because of his next statement. “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.” This is what I would call **The Perplexing News – We do not yet see everything in subjection to him. (Heb. 2:8b)**. This statement declares the reality of our imperfect lives and imperfect world. We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Yes Jesus reigns supreme over the universe and over those who oppress us. So why do we still experience this oppression? We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Yes Jesus reigns supreme over nations and rulers. Yet nations and rulers lead their countries away from Him. They pass laws that violate His word and His will. So why doesn't Jesus deal with those rulers? “We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.”

Yes Jesus reigns supreme over our lives, relationships, work and dreams. Yes, Jesus reigns over illness and hardships, trials and plans. So why do we still struggle when Jesus could resolve it all in an instant? Why did my loved one still die of that disease? Why am I not

seeing the next step forward in my life, career or plans? “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.”

We live under the inaugurated reign of Christ. Yet it will not come in its completeness until the end of the age – the time of perfection. It's kind of like the experience of Louis Zamperini and many other Prisoners of War near the end of World War 2. If you've seen the film or read the book “Unbroken,” you may know this story. Japan held many prisoners of war from 1941 to 1945. We tend to think that the war ended the moment of the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945. Yet, the surrender ceremonies did not happen officially until September. There was a lot of work to do in reaching the prisoner of war camps throughout Japan.

So in the film, to release the prisoners, Zamperini and friends are in a POW camp by Tokyo. They fear that if the war ends, their guards will massacre them. So the atomic bombs hit. News about this comes to Tokyo. The guards become very agitated over the next few days. Then Japan surrenders. But they stop supplying the POW camps with food and other items. So the prisoners paint POW on the roofs of their camp. This enables their air force to drop supplies to them until the ground troops can eventually arrive. So though the war was

won through those atomic bomb drops, the POW's still had to survive until their liberators actually arrived at their camp.

When Jesus died, was resurrected and then exalted to the right hand of the Father, He won the war over our great enemies. Yet we still await His return to establish that glorious kingdom. Until then, we still have to live in our imperfect world with our imperfect lives.

So how do we do that? We see how in the next verse. So look at the end of Hebrews 2:8 into 2:9. "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels." Where did we just hear "a little while lower than the angels? From that quote of Psalm 8 back in verse 7. "You made him for a little while lower than the angels."

Then the writer names Jesus for the first time in this letter. So here is the key to living the imperfect life. We see him. We **look to Jesus**. This Jesus, who was made for a little while lower than the angels who was crowned with glory and honor because of his suffering of death who by God's grace he would taste death for everyone. The writer here begins to change the focus on Jesus. He has emphasized the exalted divine nature of the Son. He will now turn to human, incarnate, "in the flesh" Son. Next week in the next passage, we will see the many accomplishments of the Son who took on flesh.

But for today, remember I promised you 2 actions that you could take to address the struggles of living with imperfection. They both involve looking to Jesus. But how do we look for Jesus?

First, **Look to Jesus WITH HOPE in the future perfection.** Though we live imperfect lives in an imperfect world, our story is not done. Jesus is at work in our lives. And we can look forward with hope to the life to come and to His perfecting work in our lives right now. Listen to Hebrews 12:2 – "Look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of God." The supreme Lord over the universe actively works to perfect our faith as we prepare for the coming perfection. So we look with hope to him that uses even our hardship in his perfecting work.

Look to Jesus FOR HELP with living in the imperfect. Not only can we gain courage and strength from looking at Jesus as the supremely exalted Lord. We also gain courage and strength because of His experience as a human in this imperfect world. George Guthrie writes, "The all-powerful Son exalted above the principalities of the universe – the Lord of heaven, is the same one who has lived among us, identified with us, and died for us. Jesus has authority over all the

forces of the universe and He can identify with us and has suffered for us.”

Yet He not only identifies with us. He actively helps us in this life. We see this help throughout Hebrews. 2:16 – “For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.” 2:18 – “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. 4:16 - Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 13:6 - So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

So to live with imperfection in ourselves and in this world – Look to Jesus with hope for in the future perfection and His perfecting work today. Look to Him for help with living in the imperfect today. When we look to Him, we gain patience to wait for resolution. We gain peace because we know He is perfecting our faith. We can live with hope trusting that He works together all things for our good. We can even relax a bit about our own imperfections and entrust that to Jesus.

Perfectionism seems like a way to succeed in this world. Yet it can sentence us and others near us to the constant tension against imperfection. Looking to Jesus, we can learn to still pursue excellence and work at something with all our heart – Yet we can relax about

perfecting everything – for we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. I pray that instead of trying to be perfect, you will instead look to Jesus, the one who suffered for you, and entrust your struggles to Him.

If you don't know Jesus, one great struggle in the imperfect world is lack of forgiveness. By the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for everyone. Through His death, he made atonement for the sins of the people – your sins. You can be forgiven. But he won't force himself onto anyone. He offers Himself and forgiveness to you. You need to receive Him and put the trust of your life on Him. Then you can begin the journey of looking to Jesus with hope to help you live in an imperfect world.

PRAYER

Psalm 28:8-9

The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed. The Lord is our strength and shield – Put your heart trust in him and go forward with his help.