

The Final Word on Salvation Hebrews 2:5-18

Preached at 8.15 and C@10 on 23rd November 2014

Intro

In 1985 Billy Joel had a hit with a song he wrote about teenage depression and suicide. The song was called 'You're Only Human'.

The tag line of the verses was:

"you're only human, you're supposed to make mistakes".

'Only human' – it's one of those expressions we'll use as an excuse... either for ourselves or someone else... like if Sue's annoyed that I forgot to take the washing off the line like she asked me to before she went to work – I might say "sorry, I'm only human you know!"

Usually when we say that we mean 'I'm not perfect' – as Billy Joel sang "you're supposed to make mistakes."

Last week when we looked at Hebrews 1, we got this majestic picture of Jesus – the eternal, glorious Son of God – the creator and sustainer of the world – the greatest figure in history – God's final and greatest word.

Remember we saw that the first readers were turning back to what they thought were the more impressive words of angels, instead of paying attention to Jesus – after all, he's only human.

You might think there couldn't be anything greater to say about who Jesus is than what we've read already.

Come and hear what's in these verses!

See if it changes what you think about being 'only human'.

I pray these words draw us closer to the majestic Son of God and help us to listen to him, trust him, and love him, so that we won't drift away from him.

The Pattern for Humanity

We saw in chapter 1 that God hadn't given any angel any greater power, authority or glory than Jesus.

In 1:5

“to which of the angels did God ever say ‘You are my Son...’”

And here in 2:5 he says

“It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come...”

As he’s been doing, he again uses the Old Testament to make his point.

I love seeing *even a Bible writer* remember he’s read something in Scripture like this – “there’s a place where someone has testified...”

He remembers clearly what the Bible says, even if he can’t quote the chapter and verse... be encouraged!

The words he quotes in v6-8 come from Psalm 8: (original)

“what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:” (Psalms 8:4–6 NIV)

Remember, because Jesus is God’s most complete word to us, we know that the Old Testament is ultimately all about him.

These words are ultimately about Jesus.

But in their original setting they’re also about humanity in general.

This is the great dignity that God created human beings to have – to be rulers over the works of his hands.

In Genesis 1:26 God says:

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”” (Genesis 1:26 NIV)

That’s what David was reflecting on when he wrote Psalm 8.

What’s a human being that God would even give him a second thought?

But Psalm 8 says mankind has been crowned with glory and honour as the ruler over God's creation.

That's what it means to be created in God's image – we reflect God's glory as we rule his world under him.

There's just one problem with that. As v8 says:

“Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.”

I wonder how 'in control' of your world you feel.

Life so often feels out of control.

Since the first humans sinned, we haven't been in control of the world or even our own lives.

We don't presently see humankind the way God created us to be.

What we see is sinful humankind. Because of sin, we are less than what we should be.

We don't wear the crown of glory and honour as God's image-bearers. So when you say, “you're only human”, what you're really saying is “you're only a sinful human.”

Messing up life isn't what it means to be truly human. Sin makes us, in a sense, less than human because the image of God – his glory and rule – isn't clear to see in us.

So v8 here is saying we presently don't see mankind being all we were created to be. And a quick flick through the newspaper and a moment's reflection on your past week should be enough to convince any of us of that.

To be truly human means to perfectly bear the image and glory of God, by trusting him and obeying him – living out HIS rule in the world and in our lives.

And we don't presently see that.

True Humanity

But (v9) we see Jesus.

I was reading something recently (I can't remember the details) but I think it was about a band auditioning a new singer.

When they got to the guy who got the job, they just knew straight away... they sent someone out to say 'everyone else can go home – we don't need to see any more'.

If you were holding auditions for the perfect human, you would send everyone else home once you got to Jesus.

...because Jesus – as 1:3 says – is the exact representation of God's being – in a human being!

Jesus is the perfect bearer of God's image in the world.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who was, for a time, through his suffering and death, made a little lower than the angels.

Jesus became one of us – a human being, living in this world, being tempted in every way that we are, and suffering the things we suffer – even death.

And in his resurrection he was crowned with the glory and honour that is rightly his, and to have everything under his feet – that is to rule over everything.

And, as we saw last week, Jesus is right now sitting at the right hand of God – in the place of all authority – ruling over all things in heaven and on earth both for now and for the world to come.

V8 says there's nothing that isn't subject to him.

That means that Jesus exercises the rule that humanity was created to exercise.

Still, as v8 says, we still don't even see everything subject to Jesus in this world of sin.

But, we see Jesus... not physically – but through the gospel we've heard, we understand and believe who he is – that he is the rightful heir and ruler of the world.

Perfect through Obedience

Last week we saw that little video Brad made about the mechanic who looked like he had the qualifications on paper but wasn't up to the task of fixing the problem.

When it comes to being sure about whether we can have confidence in Jesus to save us from sin, we don't have the same problem.

See, the only way for someone to save someone else from the consequences of their sin is if they're not facing the same consequences themselves.

If a football player gets suspended, another suspended player can't go and win the game for him.

But, by the same token, a player who hasn't been suspended can't win the game if he doesn't go on the field and play.

Jesus qualifies on both counts. He can substitute for anyone because he's not facing the penalty for sin that we all are.

And he's not free from that penalty because he never went on the field.

By becoming a human, Jesus put himself through the life of temptation and suffering that we go through.

And yet finished the game – even to death like us – without a single penalty!

He lived his entire life obediently under the rule of God as humanity was created to do.

He was tempted like us in every way we know, but never sinned like we do.

In v10 it says that Jesus as the author of our salvation had to be made perfect through suffering the same things we suffer.

That's doesn't mean Jesus wasn't the perfect Son of God – it means that in order to be qualified as our Saviour he had to make it through the life we live, without failing.

He had to live out what we were made to be in order to save us from what we've become. And he did.

And Jesus lived the perfect human life – even to death – so that we could become like him – the human beings we were made to be – through faith in him.

...as v11 says

“both the one who makes men (and women) holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers...”

When we struggle against temptation and sin, we can be confident to pray to God knowing that, in Jesus, he understands perfectly what we're going through – because Jesus has lived our human life.

The eternal Son of God shared our humanity. He wasn't only human – he's ***truly*** human.

And his perfect human life of obedience to God – even to death – has opened the way for sinful humans like us to become what we were created to be.

Eternal Humanity

There's one last point.

Humans live in fear of death. V15 talks about us as being held in slavery by our fear of death.

Death is the universal human condition – no that's not right.

Death is the universal ***sinful*** human condition.

We're in slavery to death because there's nothing we can do about it. It's our master in the sense that nobody can refuse to submit to it forever.

I find so many people just avoid the subject – nobody wants to think about it.

But the true humanity of Jesus destroys our fear of death. It may still not be a pleasant experience when it comes... but believing in Jesus means we needn't fear it when it comes.

...because as the author of our salvation, Jesus is like the trailblazer who's shown us the way through suffering and death to life.

He's shown us that what *he* has, *we'll* have if we believe in him... that if we listen to him carefully and trust the gospel, we'll rise to new life with him where we'll be like him – **restored true humanity**.

Heaven isn't angels playing harps on clouds. It's creation restored under the restored rule of restored mankind under the restored rule of God over all.

So Christians should not – and must not – be enslaved to the fear of death.

Through death, Jesus has perfected our salvation. If we trust in him, death is the final stage in our restoration to what God created us to be.

That's why Christian funerals are such an encouragement, even though sad... because a brother or sister in Christ has come to the goal of what Jesus created and saved them for.

If we're Christian, death is the doorway from 'only human' to 'truly human' like Jesus. There's nothing to fear in that.

Conclusion

Last week we saw the eternal majesty of God the Son.

How amazing that this eternal majestic Son lowered himself to become one of us – a human being – tempted in every way like us... He understands all our temptations, trials and suffering.

Be confident to pray to God, confessing your failures, not excusing yourself as 'only human', but confident in the obedience of Jesus the perfect human to understand and forgive you and restore you.

If we keep trusting in this word of his grace in the gospel, he'll restore us to be all that he's made us and saved us to be – not 'only human' but 'truly human' like Jesus.