

(Hebrews - Part 10): Jesus Made a Little Lower That the Angels

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer explores the profound implications of Christ's incarnation and suffering, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the necessity of spiritual growth for believers.

Duration: 39:04

Scripture: Genesis 18:25, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Hebrews 2:10, Revelation 2:10

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the perfection and flawless nature of God's work. He highlights that God's ultimate goal is to bring many sons under glory. This is achieved through the effective operation of Christ's work, which brings sinners to salvation and instructs them to observe God's commandments. The preacher emphasizes that becoming a Christian is just the beginning of the journey, and God leads believers towards the completion of their sonship. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of cooperating with God in order to minimize suffering and trouble, as God is right in bringing many sons under glory through suffering.

Transcript

Chapter 2 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, beginning with verse 10. For it became him for whom all things, or for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.

For which cause is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And when I begin, I will put my trust in him, and again behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Now, we'll have to break off right there, and we're going this morning to try to let the Holy Spirit speak to us about these things that are eternal, having to do, as we note in verse 9, with Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, in order that he might undergo the suffering of death, and was later crowned with glory and honor. This one is the one of whom the Holy Spirit is speaking, and he begins by saying, It became him. That is God.

It became God, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things. Now, you only have to read that far, and if your spirit is in a good mood, and your life is right, you will begin to take off immediately. It is amazing how the apostles and psalmists are able to lift us in two or three lines of print from the confused, busy, and complex world into the very heavens themselves.

For whom are all things, he says, and by whom are all things. And immediately we're looking at God. We're beholding God.

We're seeing our Heavenly Father, and we're seeing that it is for whom, he's the one for whom all things were made, and by whom all things were made. And then says the man of God speaking in the Spirit, It became him. Now, you see, while God is sovereign and answers to no man for his conduct, and will not stand before the bar of any human judgment, yet God has made man a reasonable being, and it would not conform to man's reasoning mind to be always confronted with unreasonable things.

Therefore, God frequently shows his reasons for things, not because he in his sovereignty is answerable to you and me, but because he chooses to do it, having honored us by making us in his image. So it says it became him. Now he's going to show us here how it could be.

This great truth of Christ's incarnation, and this condescension of the second person of the Trinity, this suffering of death, this has to be justified before man's reason. Not that man can ever get to God to make God answer to him. That is beyond all thought.

God will answer to nobody. God is amenable to none, and all men are answerable to God. And yet God says now, into all that I have done here it becomes me.

It's the old word for meaning, it's appropriate, it's the right thing, it's the fit and becoming thing. I am perfectly happy to have God do things that I can understand. I am joyfully willing that God should fly the plane for me, that he should run the machine for me, that he should portion out my life for me, that he should make my plans for me.

I am perfectly willing that he should do all that, because he knows how and I don't, he has the power and I haven't. But being made in God's image, I repeat, I have a mind that must know why a thing was done, or at least know that it was not unreasonable, and so it became him. It is necessary to my peace of soul that I know that whatever God did, God did well.

It is necessary to my intellectual balance that I understand that what God did, God did rightly. It is necessary to moral health that I rise in the morning and know that however things come out, it will be all right. They will either be good and favorable to me, or they will be unfavorable.

If they are good and favorable to me, then it will be by the grace of God. If they are unfavorable to me, then it will be the discipline of God upon me. So in either way, it will be all right.

Paul said, If I live, that will be all right. If I go to be with the Lord, that will be all right. I have my choice, I don't mind telling you, that I would rather go and be with the Lord.

But in either case, it will be all right. It is necessary that we have that kind of faith and that we do not depend upon the things that we see. We are never to lean on anything.

Occasionally you will see a man leaning up against a building. It always makes me smile. I suppose he is resting himself, but the building doesn't need it, and he is wasting a lot of time there.

But we lean against things. We are not to lean on anything or try to figure anything out. I want to carefully warn you away from trying to figure out the ways of God.

There are two kinds of people among Christians, or there are many kinds, but I have in mind two kinds now. The ones who are at least one of these kinds, they are the people who are always telling you that they have an informed source. They say, There is no news on this yet, but we have it from an informed source that they are going to do so and so.

Well, there are those who imagine themselves to be in a position where they can have a private line to God's purposes. And if somebody falls down and breaks his leg, they immediately raise their eyebrows and say, I knew it. I knew that he had discipline coming.

They didn't know it at all. They are just little mean people who didn't like the fellow, and they are glad he broke his leg. But they are pious enough that they want to try to find a good reason for that, you see.

Don't try that, my friend. Don't try it. Because if the neighbor next door breaks his leg, and you say it's because he wasn't attending church, it's because he didn't tithe, or because he wasn't keeping up in prayer, what do you do when you break yours? You see, it will be a bit embarrassing.

So I'd suggest that you leave it to the Lord, and don't try to figure out the ways of God, because the ways of God are beyond finding out. Though I say again and repeat that God sometimes, because he honors us with intelligence, reports to our intelligence and says, it becomes me to do this, now don't worry about it, I'm doing it the right way. I believe this.

I believe this. I live this way, and I believe that God is doing it the right way. Shall not the judge of the whole earth do right, said Abraham? How did Abraham find that out? Now, if a man had said that in the seventeenth century or the twentieth century, he'd have had several thousand years of biblical revelation behind him.

He'd have had all the preaching of the great preachers and the teaching of the great reformers. He'd have had the apostles, and he'd have had the coming of Christ to the world, and he'd have had the prophets and the psalmists and Moses. If he'd spoken in the nineteenth century or the eighteenth century, we could have said, oh, he's figured that out.

The judge of the whole earth is going to do right. But it was Abraham that said, it shall not the judge of the whole earth do right, and he didn't have one line of written scripture. He'd never heard one hymn sung.

He'd never heard a sermon in his life. He had never been to a prayer meeting, never one. He'd never attended a conference, and here heard them move in seconds.

He had never been anywhere among the children of God. He had come from a heathen home in Ur of the Chaldees, and suddenly it bursts upon him, God's got to do right. The judge of the whole earth can't be wrong.

And that became a strong pillar in the life of the man Abraham. We must answer the question, shall not the judge of the whole earth do right with the radiant? Yes, the judge of the earth will do right. Now, I have said

in my series on the attributes that the source of most evil is a low opinion of God.

Back here in the book of Psalms that comes out, he says, You saw a thief, and you consented with him, and you gave your mouth to evil, and your tongue framed deceit, and you sat and spoke against your brother, and you slandered your mother's son, and because I kept silent, you thought I was altogether such a one as thyself. We always try to make God in our image and pull him down to our side. I am sure that there are many, many deacons who would conceive of God as a particularly large and very intelligent and good deacon, and they try to make God think like them.

My brothers and sisters, it is my business not to try to make God think like me, but to try in prayer and penitence to think like God. For God made me in his image, I can't make him in mine. Now, I have got to remember that God's treatment of the world and God's treatment of the Church and God's treatment of me is, I have got to have a blanket acceptance of God, I must accept God by a blanket acceptance, I must say to my heart, now, don't you try to edit God.

You let God stand as he is, and whatever he does becomes him. Whatever he does, that's right that he should do it, it's becoming to God that he should be that way. And don't you try to change it, and the peace of heart, I say, comes, and growth and spiritual strength, when we remember that everything that God does is going to be done in a manner perfectly wise, so that there is no mistake possible, and perfectly fully, so there is no wrong possible, and perfectly good, so there is no unkindness possible, and perfectly just, so there is no unfairness possible, and perfectly strong, so there is no weakness nor failure possible.

Now, this we've got to take as the basis. This is what you build on. You don't build on sand, you've got to get down below the sand to the bedrock.

Let's say the city of New York is built on one great piece of rock, one solid rock, bedrock, and to get down they have to blast and chisel through rock to get down. It's a good thing it is, because a high concentration of population and with all those tall buildings towering into the clouds, it sure would push down any weak foundation can't push down rock. And God is the rock.

These things about God, they are the rock upon which we stand. When it says that the Son of God became a little lower than the angels, that became God. That was a just right thing to do.

When it said that he suffered in death, that was a good right thing to do. And we cry with the angels, the judge of the whole world is bound to do right. And when God allowed him to, by the grace of God, take death for every man, that was a right thing.

Nobody can find fault with that. That became God. It was a just thing to do, so there was no injustice possible.

It was a holy thing, so there was no unholiness possible. And it was a good thing, so there was no unkindness there. Now that we've got to believe.

So salvation is the infinitely wise plan of God, carried through in perfect goodness, with flawless precision, to an infinitely efficacious consummation. That sounds like jargon, and it is. But I'll try to break that down and say simply that God, being infinitely wise, has a plan for us.

And that plan is being carried out by God in perfect goodness. There are no little bits of malice, no little edge of malice. I read the other day, I don't remember where, I don't try anymore to remember where I

read things, I just read here and there and try to remember where it all came from.

It would drive me crazy trying to remember it afterwards, so I just get it. This man was talking about Christians, and he talked about the exquisite malice of the people of God. I don't like that, and I wish it didn't have to be said, but I suppose that I have never been anywhere where I have seen finer malice than I have seen in churches among Christian people.

And we have a way of disguising it. We have a way, a sinner, you know, he'll flip his cigarette into the gutter, and in great rumbling, loud and noisy curse words, he'll tell you about the man. We Christians are too nice for that.

We wouldn't be caught doing such an impossibly terrible thing. So we lower our voices, and in a pious tone we skin him without his ever knowing his head being taken loose from his body. And all he has to do is shake, and it drops off.

We've done him in. We've skinned him good, and we've done it in the most perfect way, and everybody but God thinks that we are very fine people. But it's exquisite malice.

We've got to be away from this. Everything God does is perfectly good, and he does it flawlessly. There is no flaw in what God does.

And there is a consummation that is the end of the thing, the end of which we are driving, the chief end of the thing. We are going to arrive at that one of these times. Now it says, It became him in bringing many sons unto glory.

I want you to notice here that the effective operation of Christ's work is twofold. It's bringing sinners unto salvation and sons unto glory. And there we have it again, go ye into all the world and disciple all nations, teaching them that they are to observe all my commandments.

After their baptism, teach them and instruct them. That is, you go out into the world and you make a convert, that's bringing a sinner to salvation. Then you bring him into the Church and instruct him for a few years, and that's helping to bring sons unto glory.

God does it by his word, he does it by his discipline, he does it by chastisement, he does it by prayer, he does it by the fellowship of the Saints, he does it in many ways. But God is bringing many sons unto glory. When you got converted, that wasn't it.

You didn't get a diploma there, saying that this man, having met all requirements, is now being granted this diploma. You didn't get it that way. When you got converted, you were born.

You were a sinner made a Christian. You became a son. But you weren't a completed son, you weren't a finished son.

You were just a son, you were just beginning. And the Lord took you there to lead you unto glory. There is a distorted view about conversion, and then he expressed the exclusiveness of anything else.

There is nothing else that matters, but regeneration is the beginning of a new life, and wherever there is a life, there is growth. And where there is no longer any growth, the life is beginning to die out. As long as we are young and on our way up, we are growing.

We grow. You grow till when you start growing, you start down. I don't like anybody doesn't like to hear that.

I know that. We don't like to hear it. We like to think that we are being renewed day by day, but we are in a measure.

But in another measure, we are not. So that regeneration is the beginning of a life, and sanctification is the development of that life by the Holy Ghost, by the blood, by the word, by faith, by prayer, by discipline, by hard work, by much, much tribulation, that life must be developed. We must be fed.

Peter said that we are to put away all the little child diseases and take the sincere milk of the word. A fellow told me one time, as little as I like to hear Greek quoted in a sermon, but a fellow told me one time that he had never been able to understand the meaning of the original word for sincere. The sincere milk of the word.

He said, What did he mean by the sincere milk of the word? The electricographers didn't help him much, and the Greek experts. So he said once he was traveling in Europe, and he went into Greece, and in the city of Athens he saw a milk truck coming down the street. And there was a sign in Greek, of course, painted on the milk truck.

And it simply said two words, sincere milk. Only the Greek word for sincere is what Peter used in his Bible. He said, I see it now.

I hadn't seen it before. I never saw it until now. It means pure milk, that's all.

Simple, wasn't it? It's not strange to take a man that long to find that out. But the Lord is good to him and let him know that when Peter said sincere milk, he meant pure milk. You don't feed babies milk that the flies have fallen into.

You don't feed babies milk that have sat around in the sun until it's blinky. And you use that word blinky here. Blinky is a good word in the country for not being real sour, but just being nasty.

Not real sour. And not thick and clabberish, but just turning so that it's got a bad disposition. You don't feed that kind of milk to babies.

You feed them sincere milk, pure milk. Milk that is not diluted, that nobody's run a hose into the can and diluted it. Nobody's put anything else in.

It's just pure milk. So you're supposed to take that pure milk of the word and let feed on it and drink it. One time I put myself on a diet.

I shouldn't do it. I don't believe in self-medication, though I practice it all the time. But I put myself on a diet of nothing but milk.

I said, I'm going to just go on a milk diet. And under this thinned down, apologetic skin milk, this was real grade A. And I drank six quarts a day. Six quarts a day.

I warmed it too. That makes some of you sick, but I thought I could do better, but it warmed. And I warmed it two quarts for breakfast, two for lunch, and two for dinner.

And no dessert and nothing else. And I preached constantly, went to conventions and had them give it to me there, went to NIAC and had them give it to me there while I was there for a week of meetings. And every place I went and while I was at home, two quarts of milk per meal.

And when it was all over, I'd put on fifteen pounds and never felt better in my life. Now, don't you try that, because some of you don't want to put on fifteen pounds, and you're feeling all right as it is. I'm just telling you that milk is a good food, and the scripture says you to take the sincere milk of the word, and if you take it, you will grow.

Babies grow with milk. And this is why we're regenerated, that we might grow, bringing many sons unto glory. Christians are not finished products.

They're God's sons in process. They're not finished products. A man looks at his year-old baby and thinks he's wonderful.

But if he looks the same when he's three years old, he's worried about him. And if he looks the same when he's five years old, he knows something's tragically wrong. So when God looks at a new Christian and hears him saying, hears him saying, Abba, Father, God is pleased.

But if five years later he's not got beyond Abba, Father, I'm sure the heart of God's concerned. And if after fifteen years of hanging around a church he's only able to say, Abba, Father, I'm sure that the Holy Ghost is grieved and heavy. God wants us to grow.

He wants us to develop and mature. It isn't our size, it's our maturity that matters. So we are sons in process.

We're buildings being put up, we're pictures being painted. We're sons growing to maturity. Now, he said in order to do this, he made the captain of their salvation perfect.

The sons are an army and they're being led by a captain, and at least we'll retain that figure, though the translators are not sure what the figure is. They differ among themselves, but it's all the same. The leader of our salvation was made perfect through suffering.

Now, you say, would the Lord Jesus Christ have to be perfect? Was not he born perfect? Was not he God of God and Light of Light, begotten, not created? Was not it said of him, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God? Yes, he was all that, and he was more than we could ever say. He is so much that we can only sing, as the young lady did reverently, O sweet wonder, Jesus the Son of God. He's all that.

But as a man, he had to be perfected. Now, what does it mean? It doesn't mean he had to be made morally perfect. It does when it's talking about us, but it doesn't when it's talking about him.

It means completing his manhood. He had to be made perfect in completion of manhood. The thing has to be tried.

Nothing is good till it's tried. Nothing is perfect till it's tried. A child that would be brought up in a nursery till he's twenty-one years old would not be perfected, even though through the wonders of science and proper diet and balance and air conditioning, he might be an example of all that's beautiful in manhood.

Strong and healthy and vigorous, but he'd be a long way from being a man. He'd be a cream puff. He wouldn't be a man.

Imagine inducting him into the Canadian Army or Navy. He'd die before midnight. Because you know, you've got to have more than simply growth, you have to have trial.

The oak tree that grows on the hill, stands the storm year in and year out, becomes tough. Its grain becomes deep and strong because it's got the wind and the rain and the lightning and the storm and the tempest to perfect it. So Jesus Christ, our Lord, though pure to the point where he was holy and harmless and undefiled and separate from sinners and higher than the highest heaven, yet he could not have been the Christ if he had merely been a hothouse perfect man.

He had to be more than that. He had to undergo all possible human experiences. The tempest had to break over him the same as it over his disciples.

Storms had to sweep down on him. He had to be hungry as his disciples were. He had to suffer as they suffered and be cursed as they were cursed and driven out as they were driven out, hated as they were hated.

He had to walk till he was tired and lie down and sleep. He had to rise in the morning and know the unpleasantness of getting going after a night's sleep. He had to know all that.

He had to undergo it all. Nothing touches his brethren, but he felt it. So there is a perfect kinship of experience with Jesus Christ, our Lord, a perfect kinship of experience.

I have often wondered how kings and presidents and men in authority in high places who never came up the hard way, have often wondered how they understand their people at all. I wonder. A man like Lincoln knew his people, but a man like Jack Kennedy, born with a silver spoon, I don't know how he knows his people at all.

How does he know? He doesn't know how a farm boy in Pennsylvania would do, but Jesus knew how his people did because he was one of them. He was born in a stable and brought up in a carpenter's shop and played with the little boys on the back lots, helped his father when he was old enough, listened to the preaching of John, was baptized, filled with the Holy Ghost, and went out and labored among men, slept under the trees at night, and had not where to lay his head, but sometimes hungered. He knew all about that.

He had the perfect kinship of experience, no talking down. I used to bristle up to my Adam's apple when Franklin F. D. Roosevelt used to talk down to us. The age of the common man.

Indeed, common man. Us common fellows out there in the Midwest and in the steel centers and in the coal mine centers, what did he know about us? Common man. Jesus knew about us.

He came where we were. There never was a coal mine where any of his people ever went in. He didn't go in.

There never was a blast furnace that he didn't stand before with his people. There never was anything that suffered he didn't suffer. There never was a tear shed that he didn't feel.

He perfectly knew his people. When Jesus came to the world, he didn't come down slumming to the world, consciously superior to the world. He came clear down to the world.

That's why he was not born in a palace. That's why he was born in a stable. The Lord wanted everybody to know, I'm one of you.

I belong to you. Notice what it says here, both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. So he's not ashamed to call them brethren.

All of one. We're one with him. He says, I'll declare thy name unto my brethren.

I like sometimes in reverent moods to kneel and remind myself that he's my brother at the right hand of the father. Now, about that suffering, making Christ perfect through suffering. Father, there are some things you will never know until you've suffered.

I wish I didn't have to say this. I wish that, and I don't wish it either. No, forgive me, Lord, I don't wish it.

But I have an edgy feeling sometimes that I wish I didn't have to say the truth always. It'd be wonderful to stand up here and quote nice things to you all and send you out all in a glow of a good feeling. And you'd shake my hand and say, that was wonderful, I feel so much better.

But the truth is, the truth is that you're going to have to know that there are some things you can't know until you suffer. I heard last night a delightful program after I went to bed. I heard a delightful program.

I don't know, we don't have anything like that in the United States. They just don't have them. You never hear them.

This was absolutely delightful. There was some fellow who was explaining about cliches and jargon, and that's my long suit, you know. I can use more cliches in one sermon than any man you ever heard.

And he was talking about them. He was talking about how governments and scientists and professional men habitually use language, and nobody knows what they're talking about. And then he was trying to straighten out the language.

And he said, for instance, during the war, he said the English foreign office, or war departments it must have been, used to issue communiques for the people to read, and would say, the British army, after attaining its objective, has moved to prepared positions. And other such expressions. And he said, everybody shrugged and went their way.

They said, well, things are going all right with us. What they were doing was retreating. But they didn't say so.

They said, Churchill got up and said, the news is bad from France. He said, then everybody knew. That's all.

He took those. He said, well, we're to tell anybody this is it. The news is bad from France.

And the whole British nation awoke and said, wow, what's the matter? We've got to do something here. But as long as they were just hearing jargon issued by generals, they didn't know a thing about it. I hear sermons on the air.

I don't know what the fellow meant. I'm sure he meant, probably meant something. I used to, when I was a boy, occasionally go to hear a sermon.

And strangely, I had no background at all, but I liked to hear a sermon. But I never heard one I understood. They always talked about family life and church life and community life.

Well, I didn't have the remotest idea what they meant. They meant something, but I didn't know what. And then I got to hearing preachers who said it, and then I began to get help.

Well, I want to say it now, and I want to say it bluntly, that there are some imperfections you'll never lose until you've suffered. There are some truths you will never know until you've suffered, either in your heart or in your body or both. And there are some mysteries you'll never understand until you've carried the cross and fallen under it.

So we might as well brace ourselves. If we imagine that Christianity is a playing ground, we're all wrong. It's not.

It's a battleground. It's a field where men work and a battleground where men fight. It's a long highway where men walk, not ride.

And we might as well face up to that. But there is grace. Thank God there is plenty of grace, grace enough for everybody, and he never suffers anybody to suffer or be tempted above what they are able to bear.

And with every temptation he makes a way of escape, and as long as there is a way of escape, we don't have to worry about the rest. So remember, Christ is not ashamed to suffer, and he's not ashamed of you, and he's not ashamed of you when you're suffering. You may be sometimes wimps and whimper under it and feel ashamed of yourself, but he's not ashamed of you.

He knows what you're going through, he went through it. He knows what you're suffering, he suffered it. And so he made the captain of our salvation perfect through suffering.

Over in the book of Revelation there's a passage. You know, I skip the 2nd and 3rd chapters. Here's a little passage I want to read to you.

This was written, and I think that this refers to the time of the ten persecutions. 2.10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. I have lived long, become an old man, said Mark Twain, and I have suffered many things, and had many troubles, most of which never came to pass.

And he's right about that. Most of our troubles don't come to pass. We suffer from fearing they'll come to pass.

So we can cut down on the intensity of our fearing by not fearing. For God will make those temptations and tribulations which we suffer, they'll make them precious for us, the crown of life. No, the devil is allowed to get to us, he's not allowed, finally, to harm us.

So God is waiting now to bring sons unto glory. Are you concerned, my brother and sister? Are you concerned to be a growing Christian? Are you concerned to be a maturing Christian? Do you know what it means to sing, I long, O, I long to be holy, conformed to his will and his word. I want to be gentle and Christlike.

I want to be just like my Lord. Or help me to be holy, O Father of light. Sin-burdened and lowly I bow in thy sight.

How can a stained conscience dare look on thy face, even though in thy presence thou grant me a place? Help me to be holy. If I thought that even twenty percent of the church people at Avenue Road were honestly longing to be holy, I would be a happy man. I would be a gratified man.

I hope that I've underestimated, I hope more. Honestly want to be brought unto glory, or cooperating with Christ in bringing sons unto glory, seeking to know God, not willing to pay any price to know him. To mount, to rise, to mature, to grow, to become strong.

This ought to be the beating yearning heart of the church. Oh, to be like the Blessed Redeemer! That ought to be the watchword of the Church, for he is trying to bring sons unto glory. And he'll do it some way.

Let's cooperate with him so that doing of it will cost us less time and less suffering and less trouble. For the more we cooperate, the less we have to suffer. But all of us will have to suffer in some measure.

And this becomes God. So let's not blame God or complain. This becomes God.

Shall not a holy God do right? He does right. Circumstances being what they are, hell being what it is and where it is, we being who we are and what we are, and heaven being what it is, God is right in bringing many sons unto glory to perfect our leader Jesus Christ and us through suffering. Amen.

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