

## God Unashamedly Calls Us Family

### Hebrews 2:9-18 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup> He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." <sup>13</sup> And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." <sup>14</sup> 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—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Family is family, right? You're born into it. You can't escape it. But not all families get along. Not all families want to be associated with one another. Sometimes you are begrudgingly related to someone: to the addict, the jailbird, the racist, the perpetual victim, the freeloader, the complainer, the snob, the spoiled brat who always gets their way. You distance yourself from these members of the family. You don't talk to them, block them or unfriend them on Facebook, maybe for years at a time. You're estranged from the family or you caused one of your family members to become estranged. You are ashamed of them or they're ashamed of you.

Family this side of heaven is never perfect. That reality causes me to recall a line from a movie where two adult sisters are arguing over whether or not their parents favor one over the other. The younger, convinced that their parents do, says to her older sister, "Ever noticed how our parents introduce us to people. 'This is our daughter: Dottie. This is our other daughter: Dottie's sister.'" That's family here on earth, which is anything but perfect.

Then there is God's family. How does one get to be a part of God's family? One can argue that all of us are automatically part of God's family because he created us, as if to be a part of God's family is no different than being born into a family, that God can say, "I brought you into this world; so you are my family." Sadly, we know that simply being born to someone doesn't mean that this is your family. Some for financial or emotional reasons have to give their children up to adoption and their children become part of a different family. Some parents neglect their children, pay no attention to them, or, God forbid, they abandon them. Parents can disown their children if they're ashamed or embarrassed by what they children have done. Children can push parents away - move out of the house, cut them out of their lives, make a new family for themselves.

When God created humankind, he never intended or designed us to be separated from him. But sin entered the world - disobedience and rebellion against God. We are sinners. We are disobedient. We are rebellious against the one who made us. What have we done that would make God ashamed to be associated with us? Stop for a minute and reflect. God holds before us his standard of perfection, requiring that anyone to be a part of his family must be perfect. Is that what I am or have I failed miserably in trying to be perfect? God sees everything I think, say, and do. He sees what I do during my moments of darkness when I think no one is looking. He knows the thoughts rumbling around in my head that I dare not utter. He knows what I have said to people behind closed doors. He knows how I put on a show for other people to look better than what I really am. He knows it all; there is nothing that I can hide from him. If he were to read a list of what I have done wrong, I could not show my face in public. He should be ashamed of me and not want to be associated with me.

My sin, my disobedience, my rebellion, my imperfection separates me from God and his family. What's worse is that my sinful acts have earned me death - not just a physical death but an eternal one. My sins and my imperfection and my rebellion pushes me away from God and into an eternal separation from his family. I did this. I pushed myself from God. You and me, separately, together, we are guilty of breaking apart God's family as we have gone our own ways. We cannot fix this. We cannot repair the family of God. We will die because we failed God, failed to be perfect. I ashamedly broke apart and estranged myself from God's family.

That's what I did, what we did, but what did God do? The author of this letter to the Hebrew Christians says, "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." (verse 9) "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—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (verses 14-15) Jesus - God from all eternity, God who made the heavens and earth and everything in them including us, immortal God with no beginning and no end - did something drastic. He came down to our level. He took on flesh and blood, sharing in our humanity, in order that he might suffer and taste death for everyone. The immortal God became mortal. Why? To “break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil,” (verse 14) to render the devil’s accusations useless and invalid.

Yes, the devil can rightfully bring up all the dark things that we have done as well as all the little things we failed to do. He is right to say before God that God should be ashamed of us and that God should estrange us from our lives, that God should cast us away from his presence forever into eternal death. But then God himself stepped in. Jesus took on human flesh and blood to be the perfection that God himself required. He took on flesh and blood so that the immortal God could now die, die a death for all people, including us. He shed his blood as God and died as God to cover over all of our rebellion, disobedience, imperfection, and sin. This makes all of the devil’s accusations useless because our sins have been covered in Christ’s blood. Our sins cannot be submitted as evidence against us before God. This is atonement as accomplished by Jesus Christ, our merciful and faithful high priest who sacrificed himself to cover over our sins with his blood.

What does this mean for us? “Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” (verse 11) Because Jesus is the one and only holy, pure, sinless, perfect God who took on our flesh and blood and shared in our humanity and tasted death for everyone, Jesus makes us holy, clothes us with his perfection. Having gone to hell and back for us by his suffering, he brought us to glory. God will not cast us aside to eternal death because Jesus perfectly completed our salvation for us. By his life and his death and his resurrection, he made us holy. In spite of all of our deeds done in darkness, all our imperfections, all our sins, Jesus as God put his perfection on us and made us a part of his perfect family. Because of what he did, he is not ashamed to call us brother or sister. Instead, Jesus embraces us with pride and joy as we are clothed with his holiness. There is no reluctance, no distance, no estrangement. He came down to us, tasted death for us, made us holy and perfect, and delivered us from the fear of death having made us a part of his family so that upon our deaths we would live with him forever.

We know the evil we have done. We know the good we failed to do. We know we have pushed away from God, refused to be a part of his family. We may think that we don’t deserve to ever be a part of his family, that God can’t love us after all we have done. But the proof of God’s love for you is in the fact that he came down from heaven, shared in our humanity, died for us, so that he now unashamedly calls us brother and sister. He made us a part of his holy family. We don’t look to our works, our deeds, to determine whether or not we are worthy to be a part of God’s family, but instead we look at what Jesus has done for us. His blood covers over our sins, making the devil’s accusations null and void. This is what makes him our merciful high priest, one who will not and does not treat us as our sins deserve. And he serves as our faithful high priest by continually reminding us that our sins are paid for, that he has made us holy, that we belong to him and his holy and perfect family. Because he tasted death for everyone, he unashamedly calls us brothers and sisters and will never stop doing so because it depends on what he did, not on what we do. Jesus has made us part of his family with the guarantee to have us live with him, with God, forever.

Rejoice that Jesus shared our humanity and made us a part of his family that he unashamedly calls us brother and sister. Embrace your fellow Christians with that same truth that Christ too unashamedly calls them brother or sister because he has made them holy as he is. Share this beautiful truth with those who do not know Christ, who struggle with finding acceptance, who see their earthly family at odds with one another. Show them Jesus who shared our humanity and tasted death for us in order to make us holy so that he now unashamedly calls us brother and sister. Amen.