

The Perfect Champion
Hebrews 2:10-18

Turn to Hebrews 2 please. The perfect champion. A champion is someone on your team who turns the tide. Without your champion, your team and the other team are about even. It's hard to tell which team will win. But you have one player who is very good, and because of that player, you're going to win.

Maybe the other team is generally better than your team, and the other team will beat your team most of the time. But there's one person on your team who is so capable and skillful that he or she will turn things around, and you will beat that stronger team every time.

This person has to be a real member of the team. If your team is grade 9 girls from a certain school, then your champion has to be a grade 9 girl from that school. But what a nice thing to have such a person on the team, especially if the rest of the team is not very good. I've played beside players like that, and I've played against teams who had such a person on their team. That's not fun.

Jesus is many things to us, and one of them is that he is the champion of our salvation. Hebrews 2:10 says "*God made the **champion** of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.*"

"Champion" translates a rare Greek word, *archēgon* (AR-kay-gone) that in Hebrews 2:10 is translated many different ways: Captain of salvation, Author of salvation, Founder, Pioneer, Initiator, Leader, Source, Originator, and in one translation, Champion. So in translating this word, it is kind of open season, but you get the general idea. "Champion" has always seemed best to me, and right now I'm the preacher, so "champion" it is.

What kind of Perfect?

2:10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the champion of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

God is in the business of bringing many sons and daughters to glory, leading many sons and daughters into glory. We're in a kind of exodus. As God led the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into Canaan, so he is leading us through this world and into glory. This has been his plan all along.

God decided that the right thing to do was to make our champion perfect through what he suffered. In Heb 5:8-9, we read that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered, and once he was perfected in that way, he became the source of eternal salvation.

God decided to *perfect our champion through what he suffered*. Jesus learned obedience from *what he suffered*, and then he became perfect.

What kind of perfect are we talking about? Jesus was sinless all along. He was without sin, but to God, that was not yet perfect. Jesus never disobeyed, so in what sense does he need to learn obedience and become perfect?

Perfecting has to do with suffering. Suffering and perfect are mentioned together in 2:10 and 5:8. Our champion had to suffer. God is leading many sons and daughters into glory. These sons and daughters, you and me, these sons and daughters suffer, you and I have troubles and sufferings.

You see, to be our champion, Jesus has to be a part of the team. If your team is your school's grade 9 girls, you can't use a grade 12 girl on your team, or a grade 9 girl from another school.

We, the sons and daughters, we suffer, and we don't find obedience easy at all. God led his Son Jesus through troubles, through sufferings, through places where temptation was strong and obedience was a real battle. That way he qualified to be on the team, and our champion. And that is how sufferings made him *perfect*.

What kind of Help does Christ give?

V16 *For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants he helps.* V18 *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Jesus our champion does not help angels, he helps people, humans. He can help those who are tempted. But what kind of help do we need?

The answer is in v17: *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, to make atonement for the sins of the people.*

What kind of help do the sons and daughters need, while God leads them to glory? What kind of help do humans need, the people of God? Answer: they need someone to make atonement for their sins. We have sins, and what are we going to do about them? Things we have done and continue to do. How will we come to God? We need help!

What kind of help? A faithful high priest who serves God by making atonement for the sins of the people. We need someone to atone for our sins. That is the main help described here.

What Jesus Fully Human in Every Way?

We read here that Jesus was *like us, fully human in every way*.

In Hebrews 4, we will learn that Jesus was without sin. The Hebrews who got this letter already knew that. The writer uses only two words to make that point, “without sin.” We know that Jesus was without sin. But was he like us, fully human in every way? The book of Hebrews works long and hard to make that point, and we need it as much as they did.

Hebrews will say in chapter 4 that Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are. He was made like us, fully human in every way; and he was tempted in every way, just as we are. My brothers and sisters, the Lord’s experience of daily life was a lot more like yours and mine than we think.

What if trying to live in God’s ways and do his will, in this messy tangled world, felt to him a lot like it feels to you? That’s what Hebrews is telling us. Fully human, just like us, tempted in every way, just as we are. How many ways does he need to say it?

Something in me says, “No, that can’t be, that’s impossible, he did not experience life anything like I do.” But Hebrews says to me, “Ed, you’re not listening.” Made like us, fully human in every way, tempted in every way, just as we are, and surrounded in weaknesses.

I’ve heard people say that if he has not sinned, he cannot be like us. That is not so. There are times when you are tempted but do not sin. At the beginning of this week, something small happened to me that made me angry. I was so displeased. I could not respond positively, or even neutrally. I do not remember praying about it.

What I did was I kept my mouth shut, completely, I did not speak about it at all. That was the best I could do. I bit my tongue. God was gracious. The last fruit of the Spirit is self-control, and God helped me keep my mouth shut. And after a few days, the inner storm went away, and I could respond properly. And that was also God’s grace.

I was tempted, but I did not sin. The difference between Jesus and me is that he always did that, he always did the right thing, and I don’t. Otherwise, made just like us, and tempted just like us, surrounded by weaknesses.

Jesus was like us, fully human in every way. I have done considerable research on this point of theology. I am frustrated by devout scholars who say of course this is true, just like the Bible says, and then they carefully describe the ways in which it is not true, he is not human like us.

But the first few centuries of theologians consistently taught that Jesus had exactly the same troubled humanity from Adam and Eve that the rest of us have. They were clear on that, and that is what the writer to the Hebrews means. You see, our champion is fully human in every way, and that way he really is part of the team. Isn’t that so great?

A detour on Christ’s deity and humanity: There is no book in the NT like Hebrews, that has both such a strong statement of Christ’s deity, and also such strong statements of his humanity.

He's not half God and half human, he's fully God and fully human, and he is just one person. No book in the NT covers both sides of this so clearly as Hebrews. Detour is over.

What Must God Have?

V17 says he *had to be made* just like us, fully human in every way. Why did God have to do that? Why was this essential, that he *had to be made* just like us?

Because: God must have a high priest for his people who is always merciful, always merciful and faithful. V17 says: ... *in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.*

In Greek the word "merciful" is pulled to the front, to emphasize it. *In order that a merciful he might become and faithful high priest.* That's confusing in English, but in Greek it is fine. They moved a word forward to put stress on it. So understand "merciful" to be in bold print.

Imagine an arrogant and self-righteous high priest. This priest was appointed by God to make atonement for the sins of the people, but he had no compassion, he did not think he had struggled with temptation, and so he sent people away.

He would tell people, "I've seen you here too often, I am not going to atone for your sins any more." This priest got impatient with people, and tired of them, and he would not help them.

And God is thinking to himself in advance, "that must never happen to my people. My people must always have a priest who is merciful and faithful, who is always sympathetic and compassionate with the ignorant and wandering, with sinners who want God. When a sinner wants to come to me, this high priest will always be merciful. That would be a perfect priest."

That is why it was fitting for God to perfect the champion of our salvation through suffering. That is why Jesus had to learn about obedience in suffering. That is why, in the beginning of 2:17, he **had to be made** like us, fully human in every way.

God led our Lord through suffering and troubles, he led him through places where it was a great struggle to obey. It says in Heb 5 that Jesus was surrounded by weaknesses, immersed in weaknesses. Because of the Lord's own suffering and troubles, because of his own struggle to obey, because of his weaknesses, he knows how miserable this can be from the inside.

In this way, God made him perfect. In this way, God made him a part of the team of men and women who follow God and need help. In this way God made him our champion. In this way, God made him a priest who would mercifully and faithfully atone for the sins of his people.

So, people, come boldly to God's throne of grace. We will always receive mercy and help.

[To help Abraham's descendants,] *the Son 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. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

PRAYER: Our great God, you wanted to make sure we who are sinners always had clear access to your grace throne. So the champion of our salvation had to be made just like us, and be tempted and suffer and be weak. We praise you for your mercy, and we praise you for his mercy. It is surely a great salvation. Amen.

BENEDICTION: To him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.