

I have experienced a great disappointment this week.

Silly me: Here I was, thinking that once the election was over, phew,,, We can move on, and the News will be about something else....

But of course that never happened... The whole week has been about post-election dissections and post-mortems... Why did the Liberal party lose so badly???

And I find most of the commentary has been quite tedious, but I was interested in an article written by Alexander Downer. For those of you who are too young to remember him, he used to be the Foreign minister when John Howard was PM.

And in his article, he homed in on 2 things that he reckons a successful politician needs to focus on:

1. Fervently patriotic:

- *don't be ashamed of your nation*
- *Love your country/history*
- *own it*
- *celebrate it.*

2. Be synonymous with your core values. Every policy needs to clearly reflect the core values of the party, and the value of them, need to be explained...

*But that didn't happen. What **did** happen, was the campaign (on **both** sides) was all driven by opinion polls. And so you ask a section of the community (usually in a swinging electorate) "What are the big issues for you? What do you*

want/need/going to win your vote? ”, and when they get their answer, “Oh well, Yes, of course we can do that for you” ... And so, the policies (from both parties) end up almost identical.

*And his point was, “That they need to stick with their own core values; and be fervently patriotic; and **then** speak to the needs of the opinion polls, showing how their core values, would lead to a better outcome for the voter...*

BTW, I don’t care **who** you voted for. But I do pray and hope that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the core values we have in Him, always inform and direct our voting decision...

Anyway, It might not seem this way (yet), but today is not about “Politics”. I used that example, because sometimes we might treat **Christianity** like an exercise in marketing/politics... where we assess from our own little poll-group (our friends/work colleagues), and adjust accordingly.

- What are your needs?
- What are you looking for?
- What is it, that you really care about?
- What do you really want in life???
- And maybe, what is it about Christianity, that turns you off???

And then we shift the Christian message to fit our polling – if that’s what you’re looking for, then that’s what I’ll preach...

And so, for some, it might become:

- a prosperity gospel.

You want comfort and pleasures – well, that’ll be the gospel I preach.

“Come to Jesus and He will give everything you set your heart on (Health; Wealth; A long life; Popular; People will love you)

Wow!, that’s a message that sells...

- a social gospel.

You want to see national change in social policy – well, that’s the gospel I’ll preach – Let’s you and I together, tell the Government of the day, “You’ve gotta spend more on welfare”...

- environmental gospel.

You’re concerned about the environment; Climate change.....

OK, well, that’s what I’ll preach.

- Or, it might be the opposite of that. My little poll group might be against the whole climate-change bandwagon, and how it benefits the super-wealthy, while the world’s poor suffer.

Righto, well come to our church, and we’ll stand up for truth and against political fads of the day.

That’s the sort of thing that happens when we assess our own little poll-group and adjust what we believe/preach, to fit what people want to hear...

1.

How about this: How about we take Alexander’s advice, and we apply it in our faith, because that’s pretty much what chapter 2 of Hebrews is about.

How about we start with the main thing, and we stick with the main thing.

Today’s bible reading covers a lot of ground. And I’m going to put it under 5 headings today. And the first heading, all of the others come under it. And the first heading is “Keep the main thing, the main thing.” And the main thing, is “In Christ, we have a gospel of a great salvation”.

Hebrews 2 sets the scene with phrases like these:

- we must pay much closer attention
- lest we drift away from it.
- if we neglect

And all of these phrases are referring to the Good News Gospel message of the “Great Salvation we have”.

You see, if being “patriotic” is being fervently for your country, well, being a Christian, is about being fervently for Jesus Christ...

- Don’t ever be ashamed of Jesus.
- Be **for** Jesus;
- Be unashamedly a worshipper of Jesus;
- Own Him;
- Celebrate Him...

You know, a whole lot of people today, are happy to talk about spirituality, but they don't want anything to do with Jesus... As a Christian, don't go down that path. Be unashamedly, a worshipper of Jesus.

And we must pay much closer attention, to **our** core message. As Disciples of Jesus, the core message that we have, is what's described here as “**a great salvation**”.

But that don't get a lot of air-play, because my poll group don't see a need for salvation – they want other stuff... But, let us **not** drift away from Jesus Christ, and let us **not** drift away from this great Salvation – Don't neglect it. Pay much closer attention to it.

But what is it? What is this “great salvation”?

“Salvation” is to be saved, but saved from what? I mean, we Christians, we talk a lot about being saved... But, why would I want to be saved, unless there's something I know I need to be saved from.

Well, we're continuing on from last week. Last week, it was comparing Jesus to the Angels, and how much higher Jesus is, than the Angels. And here's another comparison.

The Angels revealed God's Law to Israel (includes aspects of punishment), but Jesus is the one who brings salvation **from** the retribution that the Law announced.

Let me put legs on that for you:

Our God is a Just God. And that's a very good thing. You do not want God to let the wicked get away with the evil that they do to others, right???

What about when you and I have done evil to others? What about when we've done evil to God? You see, if God is truly just, He cannot let **any** evil go unpunished... Justice is always a good thing, but when I'm on the wrong side of Justice, that's not a good place to be.

And so, this “great salvation” that we have, is about getting us on the right side of justice.

V2 is talking about when the Law of God was given to the people of Israel (Think 10 commandments, but the Law was much bigger than that). And yet Jesus summarised all of the Law in 2 sentences:

Mark 12:30 (ESV) And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

And **'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'**

That summarises all of God's Law. But, have we done that? Have you always loved God with every part of your being? Have you always loved your neighbour as yourself??? It's a tough ask, isn't it... So, every person fails in this. You've failed it; I've failed it...

And V2 says **every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution**

Alright, so here's the predicament. Compared to the true goodness and holiness of God,

I am:

- the sinner;
- the rule-breaker
- the transgressor

- the one who has been disobedient
- the one who has rejected God

- the one who has disregarded God's rightful position as Lord, and act as if I'm the boss...

And because God is a Just God, I fully deserve a due reckoning on the Day of Judgment.

And so, the Gospel (good news) of "a great salvation" becomes really really great news: Hebrews puts it like this: **because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone**. ...

You see, Jesus was nailed to the cross, so that we can escape what would be "just retribution"...

Are you with me?

"Great salvation", sets us free, from "just retribution".

But, if I neglect this great salvation, I am not saved – If I neglect the Gospel of Jesus, I remain condemned.... And if I neglect to **preach** this great salvation, people might get to hear

what they want to hear, but they haven't heard the Gospel that saves.

This is a message, so important, it was attested to by Jesus; It was attested to by His apostles; And it was attested to by God.

Alright, so, the Angels passed God's Law on to humans. **Jesus** is the one who brings salvation from the retribution that the Law announced.

So, that's the first point (and the overarching point): keeping the main thing, the main thing. Jesus is the centre (be unashamed of Jesus). And the "great salvation" from sins, is our core message. It must **not** be neglected...

2.
Righto, let's move on to the second point (speed up). The wonder that God cares for humans.

Up until now, we've been talking about the justice of God, and how genuine justice demands retribution. And for those who are against God, that's probably all they're going to see. And they won't recognise it as "justice" – all they're going to see is the "punishment"... And interpret that as, "Oh, he's an angry God – so judgmental...."

And yet, those who know God, know Him as gracious; merciful; and loving...

Hebrews quotes Psalm 8, where it asks the question:

**⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?**

And Psalm 8, is a song that Israel used to sing, about the grandeur of the universe, and that somehow, in the perspective of the whole universe, God is mindful of humans.

Now, to a Christian, this comes as no surprise. God created men and women in His own image. He created us just a little lower than the angels... And so, it makes perfect sense that God loves you and God cares for you and me...

But, I'll tell you what doesn't make sense: What doesn't make sense, is **if** man descended from slime (as some would have us believe),,, then what value does man have, above slime...

You see, there's 2 different world-views at play here. The Christian worldview reminds us that we are created a little lower than the angels... The atheist (the belief that there is no god) worldview tells us that we have evolved just above the level of swamp-slime...

I think I'll go with Psalm 8. Humans: Men & Women; Boys & Girls; Babies who are presently being knitted together in their mother's womb, right through to the elderly, who may be in their last hours of suffering before they die, are known by God, and are loved by God, because you are **not** slime...

Every human being, has been created in the image of God, and God loves you so much, that He gave His only Son.

3.

Which leads us to the third point: The descension and the ascension of Jesus.

Jesus was brought down, but now He is raised up.

Jesus, Who **was** high above the angels, lowered Himself, to our level – a little lower than the angels.

Do you realise what that means?

Jesus, the Creator of the Universe, put Himself into the hands of His creation... He allowed Himself to be tortured by His own creatures; and killed by His creation.

And so, for our sake, He became low – to the very depths of the low – nailed as a criminal, on a cross (beaten; whipped; scourged; spat upon; mocked; humiliated)...

But by the power of God, He is raised back to life.

Hebrews takes this Psalm and applies it to Jesus.

⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels;

you have crowned him with glory and honour,

⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Jesus has been raised again in glory. And He has all rule and all authority.

And you might say, “Hang on a minute Michael, it don’t look like it to me.” because whenever I look at the world, I see evil:

- Sin;
- Crime;
- Rape;
- Murder;
- Unchecked immorality;
- Wars;
- Lies;
- Lives destroyed by drugs and abuse...

At the moment it doesn’t look like everything is subjected to Jesus...

But, Hebrews lets us know, but the time is coming.

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 honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

4.

The fourth point:

The completing work of suffering.

On the world stage, Jesus Christ cannot be ignored. No serious historian can suggest/question the historical existence

of Jesus, and the enormous impact He made through His life and death.

Even other religions cannot ignore Him. e.g. Islam recognises Jesus as a very important prophet, but they cannot accept that Jesus is God, because they cannot accept that an all-powerful God, could suffer and die...

And yet, this is the whole point. It is at the cross, where we see God as He truly is.

V10 tells us that Jesus was made perfect through His suffering. That's a strange thing to say. Wasn't Jesus already perfect?

In the original Greek, the word τελειῶσαι (teleiōsai) (perfect), means perfected in the sense of “completed”. *Think of a painter finishing off his masterpiece. And he puts his finishing touches on it – He perfects it...*

Jesus was already perfect. So, how did His suffering perfect Him??? Well, it's through His suffering, that we can see God as He truly is. His perfection, is in us being able to witness His merciful, self-sacrificial nature... – love that has no bounds – a love that cost Him His all...

Something that really gets up my nose, is when a super-wealthy celebrity:

- *takes a limousine from their mansion in Beverly Hills;*

- *hops on to their private jet and flies in indulgent luxury to a third-world country;*
- *When they arrive, they are chauffeured in a luxury Range Rover to a food distribution point.*
- *And there, they have their photo opportunities as they dish up a few meals for the poor...*
- *They might stay there for as much as an hour or maybe 2, before they retire to their luxury resort...*
- *And the fans will ooh and aah “Aren’t they wonderful people, for the way they care for the poor...*

At this point, I’m looking for a vomit emoji.

How did they ever identify with the poor? Dishing up a few meals... Rubbish.

How are they generous??? When they give so little, and keep so much....

How can a King be one with His people, unless He has lives and dies with His people???

One of the most common questions/statements against God, is “Why does God allow suffering?” Well, I’ll tell you why?

It’s because I cannot be completed as a human, unless I have experienced suffering.

It is through suffering, that we are recognised as we truly are.

Those who are in the medical fraternity know this probably better than most.

When a person suffers, some:

- will cry, while others,
through their tears, will find reason for joy;
- will become needy, while others,
despite their need, will still aim to serve;
- will become angry and bitter, while others,
will be filled with love and compassion
- will feel like they've been cheated, while others
will feel blessed
- will be the picture of selfishness, while others,
remain self-less

When a person is young; fit; healthy; rich; athletic – when everything's going well and going their way, it's as easy to look good, as it is to feel good...

But plunge that same person into suffering, and see who they become... Some will curse God. Some will sing His praises....

And I think of Jesus (when He was suffering on the cross), and how He prayed, “**Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing...**”

Why does God allow suffering? It's because I cannot be truly human, unless I have suffered. You were created in the image of God. God the Son, was perfected through His suffering.

And we are completed as we enter into the suffering of Jesus....

5.

Which brings us to our final point: Brotherhood with Jesus.

V¹¹ For he who sanctifies (Jesus) and those who are sanctified (Disciples of Jesus) all have one source. (all come from God) That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers

Jesus came down to us, so that He could lift us, up to Him.

And this is where the glory of Jesus is found. A verse I skipped over earlier was V10, where it talked about Jesus bringing many sons to glory

And this is not a side issue. This is the pinnacle of the joy of Jesus – it's the pinnacle of the glory of Jesus...

In the Book of Revelation, we're given an image of the church (Christian men & women) as the bride of Christ, waiting for Her groom... And how we will be presented to Jesus (pure and holy) on the day that He returns... And what a wonderful image it is.

I can tell you now, the pinnacle of my joy as a husband, was to see Robyn in her wedding dress, walking down the aisle, for us to be joined together, for the rest of our lives... Oh what joy...

And here's Jesus, not ashamed to call us "brothers" (and sisters)...

"I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your
praise."

This very day, as we meet together, Jesus is with us. And there's no place He'd rather be, then right here, with you and I together. And on this Sunday Morning, there's no place He'd rather be, then joining in worship with **every** congregation of **every** church in this town; and this country; and across the globe...

¹³ And again,
"I will put my trust in him."

When Jesus walked this earth, He had to walk by faith, as do we.

And again,
"Behold, I and the children God has given me."

I do wish our translations of the Bible used a different word to "Behold". It sounds so religious. Who uses the word "behold" anymore??? I simply means "Look" – "Would you look at this..." Me, and the children God has given me...

Back in the day, there was a thing called a “Brag Book”... A tiny little photo album that old ladies would carry in their hand-bags, with photos of their grandkids... Now they just have a phone. And if you go up to Granny B and ask her about her grandkids, she will whip out her phone, and show you a whole heap of photos of them, because she loves them that much, and she is so proud to be their grandma...

I want you to think of that when you read this... Jesus saying, “Would you look at that – Me, and **the children God has given me.**”

That’s how much it means to Jesus, to be one of the saved...

And that’s why we come back to point 1:

- To keep the main thing, the main thing...
- “Jesus Christ”, is our focus – Be unashamedly, a worshipper of Jesus.
- And our core message, is this great salvation that we have in Jesus...

Let’s pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
What a privilege it is, to be called a child of God.
And how much more wonderful it is,
when we know how much it delights You
to be in the company of Your children.

Lord, forgive us
for when we have not kept You at the centre;
Forgive us,
for when we have drifted away from the Great Salvation
we Have.

Lord, we turn our hearts towards You.
To you, I surrender my whole self.
You are the King;
You are my Lord;
You are my reason for being.

Lord, I thank You,
that You suffered for us,
and that You are with us, when we suffer.
And we pray, that through
Life; and Joy; and sadness,
that You would strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit,
as You transform us, to become like You.

in Jesus' Name, Amen.