

"For it became him, 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." Hebrews 2:10

The letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus "the captain of salvation." In the Greek version of the OT this word is sometimes used to refer to military leaders and captains. In the OT there were men who were appointed as captains over hundreds and thousands. There were also captains of the army and horsemen or cavalry. So here, in our Scripture lesson, the author of the letter to the Hebrews uses this image of a captain to tell us something about Jesus whose birth we have just celebrated.

When I hear Jesus called "the captain of salvation" I see a visual image in my mind. I see a company of soldiers at war at night and we are among them. Bullets fly over our heads. Bombs burst all around us lighting up the landscape and revealing the bodies of war victims all around us. Now this army is not an army of professionals. It is an army of men and boys, the matron and the maid. I see this bizarre image of old wrinkled women in combat boots shouldering M-15 rifles. I see young girls and boys in battle fatigues throwing hand-grenades. I see factory

workers, school teachers, secretaries and clerks who have no experience at all with weapons on the battle line. There is "no rest" for us night or day. We are "troubled on every side, without fightings, within fears." We are surrounded by our enemies. There are even enemies among our own ranks. And we are up against a terrible army of professionals. And what is even more frightening we are engaged in combat "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Now who of us would not be terribly afraid in that situation, confused, not knowing which way to go nor knowing how we and our loved ones can possibly escape death, torture, and captivity? But we have a captain who urges us on. He comforts us. He seems to be everywhere at once among us. He inspires us. He comes to our side when we are wounded and fallen. He takes our little ones in his arms. He touches the matronly woman whose in bleeding and near death. He speaks with authority to us. "Never man spake like this man" as he issues his commands and orders. He inspires hope within us. He inspires confidence. He inspires great loyalty. And against incredible odds and

through his merits, alone, we finally reach safety. We come through the battle. We have been wounded. Some of us have suffered terribly but we make it safely home and not one of all our army is lost. We return to our homeland where our captain leads the victory procession and we bask in the glory made possible by him. Jesus is our captain. Few of us have been under fire in war. But life is a battle against sin, ^{temptation,} ~~and~~ satan and death.

Now our text tells us that our captain was "made perfect through sufferings." In other words the ability of Jesus to enable us to win the battle and bring us to glory is based upon his sufferings, sufferings which he has experienced from the time of his birth to the time of his death on the cross. In any army a captain is usually someone who has had some experience or special training. A West Point cadet suffers incredible rigors to prepare him or her for the responsibilities of being an officer. The officer always begins at the bottom. He begins as a lowly plebe, a cadet. And after four years of rigor and suffering he graduates and becomes an officer.

A draftee or a private doesn't lead an army into battle but someone who has had special training and perhaps even battlefield experience. Jesus is the perfect captain because

he has suffered battlefield experience with temptation and testing, with Satan and the armies of the darkness. He also began at the bottom, as a lowly plebe, a cadet. He began his earthly existence as an embryo, as a fetus. He went through the trauma of being born. He went through the temptations of childhood and the pain of adolescence. "For in what he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (help) them that are tempted."

Are you tempted? ^{to disobey the Captains orders.} Are you facing some temptation? I'm sure that there is someone here this morning who is struggling, probably secretly, with some temptation. Jesus is able to help you because he also suffered temptation. And his help is to be found within the church as the holy Spirit helps us through one another.

As you battle your way through life
 'Are you, ^{sometimes} afraid of death? I cannot say that I am completely free of fear of death. *Someone has said that every good soldier has fear.* My faith has not yet been perfected.⁴ But Jesus' faith has been perfected. Jesus helps us because he has faced death. He has actually experienced death. "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to

bondage."

Are you guilty? Do you sense deep in your heart that you are a sinner and need to be reconciled with God? Do you ever wonder how you can make up for your sins? Trust in Christ as the captain of salvation. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Finally, our text tells us that through Jesus, our captain, God is "bringing many sons unto glory." The word "sons" includes daughters. It is a generic term. But the important thing is that God is bringing "Many", not few, to glory. I believe that there are some people, perhaps some of you, who have this vague fear that salvation is perhaps only for the few. Therefore you have no assurance that God wants to bring you to glory. But God is bringing many unto glory.

The motto of the Marine corp is, "We need a few good men." But the motto of him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, is "bringing many sons to glory." That is his motto. If you are applying for a job and you know

there are only a few openings and thousands of applicants you may be discouraged. You may not even apply. If you are a high school or college student thinking about going out for some athletic team, you may be discouraged if you hear that very few who go out make the team. You may be so discouraged that you don't even try out. But if you have confidence that many will be accepted and no one who applies will be cast out, then wouldn't you be encouraged?

God is telling us in our text that he is bringing many to glory. Not few, but many. Doesn't that encourage you, whoever you are? Won't you then say with the Psalmist, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church I will sing praise unto thee and again, I will put my trust in him"? Won't you put your trust in Christ as the captain of your salvation? He will give you victory over sin, Satan, and death. He will help you when you are tempted. He will forgive your sins and bring you to glory if you trust him as your captain.

AMEN