

Every year since I can remember, my brother Bert has sent me a birthday card. In that birthday card is a personal note, letting me know a few things that have been happening in his life. My brother is 15 years older than I am, and was the best man at my wedding. When I need some free legal advice, he is more than happy to help me where he can. He is a retired attorney. Should I ever run into a jam in this life and my wife or daughter are not available for support, I would go to my brother. I know he would be there for me, to help me in whatever way he could. When people look at the two of us together, they can see we are not adopted, since we look alike. My brother is not ashamed of me, that I didn't end up in a more lucrative profession. He is proud to call me his little brother, who is a pastor.

But as much as I love my older brother, he has flaws. I once asked him if he was ever a Supreme Court Justice, if he would be pro-life, and he was wishy washy. Basically, anything pro-choice was fine with him. If I got critically ill, and needed nursery home care, he probably wouldn't come down to Florida and visit me every day. Likewise, it doesn't make sense for me to give him the Power of Attorney, because since he is 15 years older than I am, he'll probably be dead before I am, and unable to handle my financial affairs. My brother has a sizeable estate saved, but I know already I am not in the will and that his daughter and other charitable agencies will gain from what he has left them. So my big brother, really isn't all he is cracked up to be.

Today, you and are going to informed from the writer to the Hebrews that we have a Big brother who loves us a bunch. He is there for us 24/7 throughout our lives. He sends us personal notes daily in His Word. He stands for the truth of God's word and is not wishy washy. He has left me and you and incredible estate. In the year 2015, we have a "Big Brother You Can Count On!

If I had lived a life addicted to crack cocaine, and alcoholism, and was in and out of the County Jail and Prison over the years, my brother Bert would not be proud of me. If my name would be brought up in conversation, my brother would probably try to change the subject, or say, "My little brother Mark, really is messed up. I don't really want to talk about him with you." From these words, you would think, Brother Bert is ashamed of me. He doesn't want to talk about my life with anyone.

I find it totally amazing that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brother considering all the shameful things we have done wrong this past year. When we start scanning our life from this past year, we see evidence of evil thoughts and unkind words and selfishness even in our relationship with people who are closest to us. Look at your angry outbursts. Look at your condescending spirit toward others who don't agree with your thinking. Look at how you have ridiculed others who have irritated you. Look at how you may have used your strong personality to intimidate others to your line of thinking. Look at the times you have been frustrated when things don't go the way you want them too. Take your ten worst thoughts of 2014. Record them on a cell phone in high definition video. Project them on a screen to a group of your family and

friends or to your congregation. How could you ever survive such a shameful revelation?

God the Father had an amazing plan from all eternity that involved using Jesus his Son to bring us out of shame into glory. “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.” The reason Jesus is not ashamed to be your brother is found not in what you have done to develop a relationship with the God who made you. It is found in what God has done for you through Jesus.

We are told here “that it was fitting” for God to make the author of our salvation perfect through suffering. Really the word perfect here means reach one’s goal. Jesus reached his goal for us through suffering. That word “fitting” reminds me of the many trips you may have made to the hardware store to find the right fitting to repair a plumbing problem. You cannot attach a hose for your wash machine without the right fittings. God has the right fitting to bring you to glory. He dumped your sin and the sin of the world on Jesus. “He became sin for us who knew no sin.” Then he had Jesus suffer for that sin. When it was paid in full the Father showed this work was complete and perfect by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the author or source of your salvation. He is the one who elevates you to the glory of being children of your heavenly Father. He reached his goal to bring us into the family of God via suffering.

Because of all that he has done to rescue you and save you, Jesus is not ashamed to be your brother. “But the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” This is a quote from Psalm 22 where Jesus the Messiah speaks about his death on the cross and his resurrection 1000 years before it happens. Do you see how eager Jesus was to be your brother and then stand before other Christians and proclaim to them, “These are my brothers and sisters?” Look at the person sitting next to you this morning in worship. See how special they are. Jesus says to that person, “He is my brother. She is my sister.” It even says that Jesus sings your praises. We gather for worship and sing the praises of our Savior and we also sing the praises of people who have become brothers and sisters to him and to each other through him.

Because Jesus is your brother, he will be there for you in the New Year whatever challenges and temptations might come your way. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil.” Satan stands in the courtroom ready to project on the screen all the sins that condemn us. The Revelation says he accuses us day and night before God’s throne. Jesus became your brother. He took on your flesh and blood and bones and skin and hair and heart and lungs that he might die a real physical death on the cross to destroy the devil’s work. The projector is turned on to project your many sins of the past year in full color. Satan chortles with delight as he presents his case against you. Then he is horrified to see projected not your life of sin, but the perfect life Jesus lived for you. All of the ugly, mean and nasty things you did as a child were removed and in its place is that perfect life of Jesus, the young Jesus we saw standing in the temple and obeying his parents perfectly.

“For surely it’s not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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 sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” The angels do not need Jesus’ help. They are already perfect. We are Abraham’s descendants who believe as Abraham did that we are saved by a righteousness outside of ourselves that is found in Christ. We need help especially when it comes to fighting against temptation.

As you make your plans for 2015 do those plans include developing a better relationship with Satan? Hardly. No, we want to fight against temptation. That is why we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” Jesus your brother, the one who took on your flesh and made atonement for your sin, also knows what it is like to battle against temptation. It says, “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Jesus suffered when he was tempted. Think of how he allowed himself to be tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He knows the struggles you experienced this past year when you listened to the devil rather than listening to the voice of the Lord. “No body knows the troubles I’ve seen. No body knows but Jesus.” We could paraphrase that song, “Nobody knows the temptations I’ve seen. Nobody knows but Jesus.” We sing, “Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

“Daddy, can we get a puppy?” said the boy as they drove by the farmhouse with a sign that said, “Puppies for sale.” I’ll think about it said the father. The next day they went to the farmer and he opened the gate where the puppies were kept. They came running out and jumped all around the boy to play with him. One puppy was behind the others trying to jump up with a leg that was slightly twisted. The boy looked at all the puppies and then decided to take the one with the bad leg. The farmer smiled and asked why he wanted the puppy with the bad leg. The boy pulled up his pants leg and showed him the large scar where surgery corrected the bad leg with which he was born. “I think this puppy needs someone who understands him.” Jesus knows the temptations and challenges you faced this past year. He knows the temptations and challenges you will be facing in the year which lies before you. He is not ashamed to be your brother.

What a marvel and a joy it is again this Christmas season to Meet Our New Family, our brother Jesus Christ. He is a brother unlike any other. He listens to our prayers and cares about our worries and our concerns and he understands them because he experienced them, too. He also is able to help us resist temptation and sin because he was able to do so perfectly. Rejoice this Christmas! You have a brother who lends us help.

Maybe you have a brother or sister (or several of them) very near and dear to your heart. Maybe you have a family that at the moment isn’t acting much like a family. Maybe you are an only child. Regardless, it doesn’t change the joy and the peace that is yours at Christmas. For unto us a child has been born, and that child is your perfect brother. He is like us, he loves us, and he lends us his help.