

# HOLY HELP FOR THE HOPELESS MAKES US FIT FOR HEAVEN Hebrews 10:1-10

*Please review this week's catechism question.*

Did you meet anyone new after Sunday worship service?

## INTRODUCTION

*“In light of the diversity of human beings and human cultures and human religious expressions in the world there simply cannot be only one way to be accepted by God and to gain heaven.”* (Spoken by Oprah Winfrey) Close to 80% of Americans would agree with this statement. What are some reasons this is such an attractive view to so many people?

It is the argument of this letter to the Hebrews that there is only one way to be made fit for heaven. Jesus Christ alone is able to make people fit for heaven and to fit heaven for us. In the first 10 verses of this chapter he is concerned with what it takes for people to draw near to God. You can see his concern in the first two verses. He points out that the OT law given to Moses at Mt. Sinai and all the sacrifices associated with it were unable to make perfect those who draw near to God to worship him. The idea of perfection here is not moral purity but fitness. It refers to the completion of a process or arrival at a goal. Something needs to happen to people who want to draw near to God in order to make them suitable for God's presence. “Drawing near to God” is not simply referring to being able to enter the Most Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle or to merely be able to spiritually draw near to God now but rather, as 9:8 and 24 indicate—it ultimately refers to drawing near to God forever in heaven. These ten verses are out to explain why it is that only Jesus can make us fit for heaven.

## STUDY

1. According to 10:1-4 why is it that the law and the sacrifices commanded by the law could not make people fit for heaven (literally, “make perfect those who draw near to worship.”)?

*First, the law was unable to make anyone fit for heaven because it is only a shadow, not the real thing. If you shine a light on a hammer it will cast its shadow on the wall. There is a vast difference between the shadow and the hammer itself. The shadow cannot pound a nail. It has no true substance and thus cannot accomplish anything. However, the shadow only exists because the hammer exists. The existence of the shadow proves the existence of the hammer and reveals true things about the hammer. The entire law is a shadow of the heavenly realities and thus while it proves the existence of “the good things that are coming,” it cannot make a person fit for heaven.*

*The second reason why the sacrifices commanded by the law could not make anyone fit for heaven is because of their repetitious nature. As v. 2 says, if the sacrifices had actually made anyone perfect or fit to draw near to God, then they would have stopped being offered. P.E. Hughes says in his commentary: “Repetition conflicts with finality: an action that is final does not tolerate repetition, and, conversely, an action that is constantly repeated thereby shows itself to be inconclusive. What is inconclusive is imperfect both in itself and in its effect.”*

*Third, the function of the sacrifices is to remind the people of their sins (v.3). It wasn't only that they were reminded of their sins but they remembered that God remembered their sins. They remembered that God was angry with sinners and that their sin stood as a barrier between them and God. This was true of all the sacrifices and rituals. The fundamental purpose of the entire law is to show people their sinfulness. The tabernacle and its sacrifices were a visual reminder of their sins and as Paul says in Romans 3:19-20, the moral demands of the law, as in the Ten Commandments, were a reminder of their failure to obey the law. This entire law and the system of worship it demanded did not remove sins but only reminded people that their sins separated them from God and his heaven.*

*Finally, the author just bluntly says that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Why is it that the blood of bulls*

*and goats cannot take away the guilt and condemnation of human sins? The short answer is because bulls and goats are not human beings. God told Adam that sin would be met with his death, not the death of an animal. Only a human death can satisfy divine justice.*

2. What is the perfection that we need in order to draw near to God forever, which the animal sacrifices could not provide but which the death of Christ does provide? See the end of v. 2 and v. 3 in the ESV: "...since the worshippers, having once been cleansed would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year."

The argument is that if an effective sacrifice is made then those who draw near to God will be made perfect or fit for heaven because they will be cleansed and thus will no longer be conscience of sin.

LEADER ASK: *What does it mean to be conscious of sin? The point is that Christ's death has done away with the guilt and condemnation of sin and this is what we are conscience of; we are no longer confronted by the condemnation of our sins. In v. 3, when the author says that the sacrifices are a reminder of sins; he is not simply saying that those who made the offerings remembered their sins. What they remembered is that God remembers their sins. They remembered that their sins stood between them and God. The fact that these animals are killed year after year combined with the lack of access to the Most Holy Place and all the other rituals confronted those who came to the tabernacle with the fact that God was angry with them because of their sins. Every believing Jewish person knew that there was no way that these animal deaths satisfied God's wrath against them for their sins. They knew that without a perfect, divine, human sacrifice they were going to perish. Because Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:26)," we know that even though we approach God as sinners that our sin cannot prevent us being accepted by him because Christ has taken away our sins. Thus what we are no longer conscience of is the condemnation of sin. We run to our Father without any fear, knowing and confessing and mourning our sin while fully confident that we will never be condemned for our sins because of Christ. While we are fully aware of our many sins we know that they cannot keep us from heaven because Christ has taken the condemnation of sin upon himself.*

3. Are you conscience of the condemning power of your sin or not? What fills your vision, your sins or Christ's once for all sacrifice that takes away the power of your sin to condemn you?

**Only Jesus Christ is able to make you fit for heaven because only Jesus can eliminate sins condemning power.**

4. Who speaks vv. 5b-7 and when are they spoken?

*This text records a conversation that the Son of God had with God the Father prior to his incarnation, prior to his being conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The eternal Son of God who became the human Christ said vv. 5-7 to his Father prior to his entering the womb of Mary.*

5. What is the significance of the "therefore" at the beginning of v. 5?

*The reason the Son said this to the Father is because of what vv 1-4 says about the law and the sacrifices commanded by that law. The Son spoke these words to his Father because the law is only a shadow of Christ and his salvation, because these repetitious sacrifices can never take away sin, because they only remind of sin and because the blood of bulls and goats cannot gain forgiveness for anyone.*

6. What is implied about the identity of this "one who comes into the world?" Compare John 1:9, 3:13, 6:14 & 38.

*This is another one of those places in the Bible where the deity of Christ is simply assumed. He is portrayed as speaking as he comes into the world as a human baby; meaning that he existed before he became a baby in the womb of Mary. The first clause of v. 5 makes no sense if Jesus Christ is not also the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity.*

7. What does the Son tell the Father prior to coming into the world and why is this significant? See vv. 5-7.

*The Son tells the Father, prior to his coming into the world that he knows that the Father does not desire and is not pleased by the sacrifices and offerings that the Father commanded the people of Israel to perform in the Mosaic Law. The temporary nature of the Mosaic Law and its sacrificial system was the subject of conversation in the fellowship of the Trinity prior to Christ's becoming a man. The Law with its system of worship was never intended by God to be the means by which men and women were enabled to draw near to him. The Triune God planned for the law to be a shadow of the heavenly realities. Then the Son acknowledges that his incarnation, his taking on a human body was God's plan and work. The Father prepared a body for Jesus in which he could obey the Father as a man. The Father intended for the Son to have a human body and he put his plan into effect by sending the angel Gabriel to Mary to tell her what was going to happen and then the Holy Spirit to "overshadow" her in order to conceive the Son of God in the womb of Mary as a physical human being. Then the Son, as he takes on human flesh, declares to his Father that his purpose in coming to the earth as a human being is to do the will of his Father. This coming of the God-man who is the Messiah is written about in the scroll, that is, throughout the entire OT. In other words the Son as he comes into the world confirms that the OT Scriptures are written about him. The law does not only remind of sin but it also reveals Christ.*

**8.** Verse 8 points out that even though God commanded that the Israelites make all these animal sacrifices, God did not desire them, nor was he pleased with them. So then why did he command them to be made?

*The Levitical system was given by God from the beginning as a visual aid to understand the reality of redemption. Every believing Israelite knew that the animal sacrifices were not the way in which they could actually know God. They knew that the sacrifices were there to remind them of the just condemnation of God against their sin and to be a copy and shadow of the reality which is Christ and his salvation.*

**9.** According to v. 9 what has Christ done to the law with all of its sacrifices and rituals?

*So verse 9 explains that when Christ came into the world he fulfilled the purpose of the law. He brought it to an end because he was what the law pointed towards and he was the solution for the sin problem that the Law continually highlighted. That last clause in v. 9 is very strong. He destroyed the law in order that he might establish himself and his work as the means of approach to God. He did this by his obedient life and death. This was the purpose of his coming into the world, to obey God in his life and to obey him by dying and to thus open the way to heaven through his own obedient life and death. It is the obedient life and death of Jesus that brought the law to an end and established the only way for a human being to be made fit for heaven.*

**10.** How does this conversation between the Father and the Son help you?

**Only Jesus Christ is able to make you fit for heaven because only Jesus is the Son who has come to do the Father's will.**

**11.** What is the benefit we receive in v. 10? Why is that significant?

*The astonishing benefit that comes to us by this sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Up to this point the primary benefit of Christ's sacrifice has been that the power of sin to condemn us has been taken away. We have been pardoned for our sins and have thus escaped God's just punishment. However, simply being pardoned of sin does not make you fit for heaven. It is not enough to be pardoned but we also must possess the holiness of God himself if we are to live with him in his Most Holy Place. It is not enough that God is not angry with you. He must also be pleased with you. You cannot please God if you are not holy. This is the language of the OT: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God for the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." God's delight in his people is always connected to their holiness. The verb "to make holy" and the associated adjective "holy" appear in the OT over 800 times. God we are repeatedly told is holy and he can only live in a holy place and with holy beings. Everything that is not holy, which is not the same as innocent or being clean, without guilt, is unfit for God's presence. Thus it is by the death of Jesus that we have been placed in the*

condition of holiness. The verbal form is what is called a passive perfect. In other words we were made holy at a point in the past and this holiness will continue forever. Again, marvel at this. We do not make ourselves holy. We are those who have been made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. This is why the shorthand word used throughout the OT and the NT for those who have a true faith in Christ is "holy ones" or, as in most of our English translations, "saints."

## 12. How are we given this benefit?

The means by which he has chosen to make us holy is through "the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." The Father prepared a body for the Son so that the Son could die in his body as a sacrifice. The Son was conceived in the womb of Mary so he could be a bloody sacrifice for us. The eternal purpose of God to make his people holy is fully expressed in that historical, physical, unrepeatable death on that Roman cross outside the gates of Jerusalem. The whole history of humanity, indeed of the entire universe hinges upon that cross. The use of the term sacrifice here again accentuates the substitutionary, curse bearing nature of that death. He died the death we each deserve. He bore all of God's wrath against our sin. Again, marvel at the fact that this is what both the Father and the Son willed. The Father determined to pour out his full anger against my sin upon his only Son and the Son willingly took upon himself the full wrath of God against my sin upon himself. There is no anger left for me because it was all poured upon the Son.

## 13. Why are we given this benefit in this way?

All the benefits contained in this verse come to us by the will of the Father and the will of the Son. God's will is for the Son to come into the world to give up his body on the cross for us. And it is the Son's will to come and do the Father's will. The conversation between the Father and the Son, prior to the Son's coming into the world that is captured in Psalm 40 is an expression of the unity of purpose of the Father and the Son to save his people. Before the world was created the great Triune God saw the captivity of the people of God, enslaved to sin, under the curse of God, and subject to the oppression of the

devil. In the eternal counsels of this great God; the Father chose to send his only Son to set them free knowing that it would cost his Son his life. The Son, out of his concern for the glory of his Father and out of his love for the Father's people willingly and gladly came to do the Father's will. God does not reluctantly save his people but rather salvation is according to his pleasure and will. As Paul writes in Ephesians, this salvation is according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ. The omnipotent, Triune God whose purposes cannot be thwarted, who always accomplishes what he chooses to do, has chosen to save you.

## 14. What difference should/does v. 10 make in your life?

**Only Jesus Christ is able to make you fit for heaven because only Jesus can make you holy, like God.**