

# HOLY HELP FOR THE HOPELESS THROUGH THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST Hebrews 10:11-18

*Please review this week's catechism question.*

## INTRODUCTION

What are evidences you have experienced or witnessed that demonstrate that Jesus' promise in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble," is true?

Jesus, in John 16:33, not only promises that we will have trouble but also that we can find peace through his word and courage by his overcoming work. We have noted on numerous occasions that the people to whom this letter of Hebrews is written were people in serious trouble. In addition to all the "normal" troubles of life they were being persecuted for their faith. Some were thrown into prison. Some had their property confiscated. Some were beaten up and mocked and ostracized. In short, they are experiencing the fullness of Jesus' promise that in this world you will have trouble. It is to people in this kind of serious trouble that the author has spent almost three and one half chapters describing in great detail how Jesus is our high priest and our once for all sacrifice. He is telling them and us the words of Jesus so that they and we can have peace. He is describing for us how Jesus has overcome the world so that we can have courage and not be overcome by the trouble. That's what this entire letter is about. It is why I've entitled the series we are doing, "Holy Help for the Hopeless." In our passage this morning he is finishing his description of this overcoming work of Christ. Therefore, as we finish this concluding section of his letter I want you to see how Jesus has overcome the world so that you can have peace and courage in the midst of your troubled life.

## STUDY

1. Review and summarize the main points of contrast between Jesus and the OC system of worship that the author has made in 5:1-10 & 7:1-10:10.

*We have noted throughout this letter that the author contrasts the OC that God gave to the nation Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai with the NC that God established with everyone who believes in Jesus. There has been the contrast between the high priests of the OC and Jesus, the high priest in the order of Melchizedek who is priest on the basis of God's oath and not on the basis of human ancestry and who is a priest on the basis of an indestructible life. There has been the contrast between the tabernacle that the OC priests served in and heaven itself where Jesus serves and performs his ministry. Most recently there has been the contrast between the repetitious animal sacrifices and the once for all sacrifice of Jesus.*

2. Verses 11 & 12 are the final summarizing contrast. What is the new element in the contrast and why is this significant?

*All of these contrasts are now brought together in this one final contrast in vv. 11-12. Virtually every word in v. 11 finds its antithesis in v. 12. However, the new point of contrast and the main emphasis between these two verses is that the priests in the OC system stand and perform their religious duties whereas Jesus has sat down forever at the right hand of God. The priests in the OC system never sat down because their work was never done. Verse 11 is a description of utter futility. There is no end to the animal sacrifices because they can never take away sins. The priests can never stop working because their work is impotent. Now Christ in contrast to the priests, after he offered his one sacrifice on the cross has sat down forever at God's right hand. The point is that his work is over and because his work is over there is no need for any other human work in order to be made right with God. His work has indeed finished all human work. There is nothing to be added to what he has done as evidenced by the fact that he is right now and forever will be seated at the right hand of God.*

3. Do you ever feel like God is angry with you or that he will not accept you because of what you have not done or because of what you

have done? How does knowing that Christ is seated at God's right hand help you to fight those feelings? If you regularly feel unacceptable to God based on your performance what are you saying to the seated Christ?

*This is a tremendous picture for those of us who are weary of working to prove that we are worthy of heaven, worthy to be accepted and loved by God. While we frantically work to demonstrate to God and man that we deserve to go to heaven, Jesus is sitting at his Father's right hand and saying, "Son, come take a load off. Come and sit down with me. I've already done all the work. There's nothing more left for you to do. Sit here. Rest in my finished work." When we work to make ourselves fit for heaven we look stupid, like the woman who dusts her shelves the hour after the professional cleaning service she's paying \$200/month has cleaned her house. But not only do we look foolish, but more importantly, we also insult Christ. When we think and act like our piety, our work, our goodness is necessary to gain salvation we are looking Jesus in the face while he sits at his Father's side and saying to him, "Your work isn't good enough. I can do it better." Dear friends, you don't want to say that to Jesus. He will despise the people who despise his suffering on the cross.*

**Jesus Christ is the only one who can give us peace and courage in this troubled world because his work has finished all human work.**

4. The last time the author talked about Christ's sitting at God's right hand was in 8:1. How is Christ's being seated at God's right hand there different from his being seated at God's right hand in v. 13? How would you put these two things together in describing Jesus' being seated at God's right hand?

*The fact that Christ is sitting at God's right hand is explicitly referred to five times in this letter and alluded to a number of other times. On most of those other occasions his sitting at God's right hand is connected to the fact that he is now and forever our high priest or representative in the presence of God. He is always interceding for us with the Father so that the Father accepts us because of the prayers of his Son, not because we are worthy. However, in v. 13 the author picks up another idea associated with Jesus' sitting at God's right*

*hand. He is giving a free form quote of Psalm 110:1, which he quoted exactly in 1:13. In Psalm 110 God the Father says to God the Son, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Jesus gets to sit at his Father's right hand because his work is done and here, while he sits he eagerly waits for the Father to put all his enemies as a footstool for his feet. On one hand we see Jesus sitting at God's right hand actively interceding for us but on the other hand we see Jesus passively, though eagerly waiting for God the Father to subdue all of his enemies and place them under his feet.*

5. What does it mean to say that all the enemies of Christ will be made his footstool? (See Psalm 110:1, Psalm 2, Ephesians 1:9-10, 19b-22, Philippians 2:6-11)

*God the Father is eagerly working towards that day when he will cause everything and everyone to submit to Christ. His enemies will be made a footstool for his feet, that is, they will be forced to submit to his lordship and to suffer his wrath. In addition, all of creation and all of his people will willingly submit to his Lordship and enter into the joy of their master. But that day is not now. Jesus, right now, is waiting for that day to arrive.*

6. According to Heb. 9:28 what is also true of us?

*Just like Jesus is waiting, so are we. We are both waiting for the same day. Look back at 9:28. There we are told that Jesus is going to appear a second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. So Jesus is waiting until the Father puts all his enemies under his feet and we are waiting for Jesus to appear a second time to bring salvation to us.*

7. Why does God not put all of the enemies of Jesus under his feet right now? Why didn't he do it as soon as Jesus ascended and was seated at his right hand?

7A. ANSWER ONE, see John 10:16, Matthew 24:14 & 2 Peter 3:9:

*The reason God has not already put all of Jesus' enemies under his feet is because he intends to save more of his enemies first. He has*

more sheep to bring out of the world and he aims to save all of his sheep. Thus he waits yet until all of his sheep out of every nation are safely brought into the fold. (NOTE: The “all” in 2 Peter 3:9 does not mean, “every person in the world.” Rather it means “all the people God intends to save.” This is the same meaning that would be used at a family gathering when the parent says, “Are we all here.” She doesn’t mean every human being in the world but all who make up the family.)

## **7B. ANSWER TWO, v. 14:**

The second reason for why he waits is in v. 14, which begins with the word “because.” God the Father waits to subdue the enemies of Christ because by his one sacrifice he made his people perfectly fit for heaven forever. Who are his people? His people are identified as all those who are in the process of being made holy.

**8.** What is it about Christ’s fitting people for heaven who are being made holy that motivates God to wait before he subdues all Christ’s enemies under his feet? (Clues: What is the “perfection” that Christ gives to us? How does the past perfect statement in v. 10 “we have been made holy” through the once for all sacrifice of Jesus relate to v. 14 where those who have been made holy are “being made holy?”)

First, remember that this idea of being made perfect refers to the completion of the goal of being a Christian, which is living with God forever in the new heavens and the new earth. Thus by his death on the cross Christ has made every Christian perfectly fit for heaven. There is nothing more to be done than what has been done by Christ. If you are a Christian you will not be more fit for heaven ten years from now than you are right now. You are as completely prepared to be received into heaven as you can possibly be. Therefore, the reason God waits cannot be to make you more fit for heaven. But notice the last clause of the sentence. Everyone whom Christ has made perfect forever is in the process of being made holy. Look back at v. 10. In that verse we were told that by Christ’s once for all sacrifice we have been made holy. Yet here we are in the process of being made holy. The point in v. 10, as we saw last week, is that Christ makes everyone fit for heaven by cleansing them from sin and making them perfectly

holy, like God. Verse 10 describes our position in Christ: we are already holy in him. But now in v. 14, everyone who has been made holy is right now, while they live on this earth, in the process of being made holy. Verse 14 describes our present condition, we are, in our experience being made holy. It is this process of being made holy that is the reason that God yet waits. One day, when we are with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth we will be in our condition what we are in our position. In heaven we will experience complete holiness, now we are in the process of being made holy.

God waits to subdue all the enemies of Christ and to bring salvation to all his people because he values the process of his perfectly holy people being made holy in this troubled world. One of the reasons that you and I are not now in heaven is because God thinks that you and I growing to be more holy in our actual experience is more important than his bringing everything immediately to an end. That process of being made holy is what is called “progressive sanctification.” It is another way of saying that we are becoming more like Jesus in this life, over the span of our lifetime, in how we think and feel and behave. It is something that is done to us: we are being made holy and it is something we participate in, we are becoming more holy in our actual lived out experience.

**9.** What is it about our “being made holy” that would motivate God to wait? See Eph. 1:4-6, 11-12, 14; Philippians 1:9-11 & 1 Peter 4:10-11.

The short answer is that God is more glorified by his saving people who grow in holiness while living in the midst of his enemies than if he immediately took everyone to heaven as soon as they were converted and then quickly brought this troubled world to an end. When the countless multitude of God’s saints, who were made perfect by Christ’s one sacrifice worship the Triune God in the new heavens and the new earth, their joy and gratitude will be far greater because they were made holy in the midst of the rampant ungodliness that is in this world. When you and I gladly choose to love others and to be morally pure no matter what it costs us because we are so delighted with Christ by the power of the HS, God is far more glorified than if he simply saved us and took us immediately out of this world of sin and to heaven. When the angry person learns to conquer his anger by

*believing that Christ is better than getting what he or she wants and so becomes a peace loving, gentle person God is glorified. When the man addicted to pornography and lust conquers his desires and learns to love sexual purity and chastity because he delights in Jesus more than the pleasures of sex, God is glorified. When the woman addicted to a perfect house and perfect clothes and perfect children learns to be happy even when the house is dirty or she's not buying more clothes or the children are acting up because she has found in Christ all she needs, then is God glorified. God is glorified when we learn to love others rather than demanding that others love us because we can't get over the fact that we are loved by God through Christ.*

**10.** What is the relationship between our actively growing in holiness (by grace) while we wait and Jesus' actively interceding for us while he waits? See Hebrews 4:14-16. How would this help you find peace and courage when you are in trouble?

*Jesus is interceding for us with the Father to obtain the resources of heaven for us so that we can grow in holiness in this life. As we saw in Hebrews 4:15-16 we boldly come to the throne of grace in our time of trouble because he is our high priest in order that we may find grace and mercy to help us. The help we are looking for is not that God change our circumstances but that he change us in the midst of our circumstances. Jesus while he waits gives us the resources we need to become more holy while we wait. We are both actively waiting. One day we will be made perfectly holy, when God puts all of Christ's enemies under his feet. Until that day, what we yearn for as Christians is to become what he has already made us. So our prayers are mainly concerned with asking our great high priest to give us his gracious help that we might live out what he has given to us by his death. Our goal is to become more holy not to live a trouble free life. If your goal is to be made holy, then no matter what trouble comes to you; you can still pursue what you love, being holy. You can have peace and courage in this troubled world because you are waiting with Jesus and we know that our waiting is not in vain because we are becoming more holy while we wait.*

**Jesus Christ is the only one who can give us peace and courage in this troubled world because he passively and actively waits and we passively and actively wait.**

**11.** Verses 16 & 17 are a free form quotation of a portion of Jeremiah 31:33 & 34 which the author quoted in the entirety in 8:8-12. What is the main point of emphasis in his reuse of this OT passage? Why does he emphasize this as he concludes this section of his letter?

*The main emphasis of this quote from Jeremiah is v. 17, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Even people who are "being made holy" still sin and thus always need their sins forgiven. Thus the author closes this section of the letter, prior to his turning to their conduct, with this powerful statement of God's forgiveness. God does not remember our sins means that God has forgiven our sins. If our sins are forgiven as promised in the NC, then that means there is no other sacrifice or act required to obtain forgiveness. If you have been made perfect by Christ's one sacrifice and thus are being made holy, you need to know that God does not remember your sins. This does not mean that God has amnesia. It means that God is not holding your sins against you. He is not remembering that you are in his debt, that you are guilty and deserve his punishment as a just judge. When he looks at you the first thing he thinks about is not your sins. He eagerly and warmly receives you without hesitation or qualification. He isn't shaking his head at you. He isn't frowning in disapproval with his arms crossed across his chest. Remember, this isn't because you don't sin it is because Christ made you perfect by cleansing you and making you holy by his one sacrifice. He shed his blood to obtain your forgiveness.*

**12.** What difference does it make to you that God does not "remember" your sins anymore?

**Jesus Christ is the only one who can give us peace and courage in this troubled world because he no longer remembers our sins.**