

Prayer

Gracious Father, You live in perfect holiness, and we long to know Your will and Your ways. But we confess the inadequacy of our understanding and our efforts, our emotions and our will. Take us, therefore, in the weakness of our humility and do that work of grace in us which will lift us up and give us true faith and confidence in You, our only provider and sustainer. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Strengths and Weaknesses

Our prayers this week will ask God to help His people gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. We often discover the truth of such things in unhelpful ways, for example, when we fail at something in which we think we excel. Pray that God's people might rediscover the strength they may find in Him, and know that their weakness lies in their sin.

Meditation

God has made us to share with each other in fellowship,
And grow through His power in mutual confidence and trust:

By sharing the thoughts and feelings God has placed on our hearts,
And trusting that we will listen to each other and understand.

By sharing the joys and trials of the life our Lord has given us,
And trusting that we will always support one another, in Christ.

By sharing our weaknesses within the safety of Christian love,
And trusting that we will bless each other in care and ministry.

By sharing the gifts and graces with which the Lord has blessed us,
And trusting that we will encourage one another, unconditionally.

By sharing the new life of the Spirit which we have received from Jesus,
And trusting that we will find in each other the love of God the Father.

God has blessed us with the potential for glorious fellowship,
So let us enjoy His gift, and never cease to bless each other in love.

Bible Study - Hebrews 10:11-18

¹¹ And every priest takes his place daily to do his service, repeatedly offering the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered one single, unique sacrifice for sins, 'He sat down at the right hand of God,' ¹³ and now He awaits 'until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet.' ¹⁴ For by a single offering He has now made it eternally possible for those who are being made holy to become perfect. ¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies about this to us, for after saying, ¹⁶ 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' ¹⁷ Then He adds, 'I will no longer remember their sins and their lawlessness.' ¹⁸ Where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Review

Hebrews continues to explain in detail the theme of Christ's unique sacrifice which deals with the consequences of our sin before Almighty God. This is the central theme of Hebrews, and as each section of the letter unfolds, we are treated to a greater and greater depth of understanding of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. In this passage, the writer explains two of the texts he has previously used in the letter, drawing out the full consequences of their meaning for the Gospel. Firstly, he quotes loosely from Psalm 110:1 (10:12,13) which he previously used in the first chapter (1:13), and concludes that the work of Christ is complete and eternal (10:14). Secondly, he quotes from Jeremiah 31:33 (10:16,17) which he previously used

in the eighth chapter (8:10), concluding that God no longer requires any more sacrifices for sin, and His forgiveness is complete.

The letter to the Hebrews is clearly intent upon explaining the reasons why Christians do not need to perform sacrificial worship, an issue that concerned early Christians. However, it is still relevant today, for some people read the Old Testament and ask why sacrificial worship was performed in ancient times, and whether it has anything to teach us now. It certainly does, for it is essential for our complete understanding of the death of Christ. We know that Jesus saved us by His death, of course, but many of the details about how this works are much better explained if we know the meaning of Old Testament sacrificial worship, as Hebrews explains.

By referring back to the second half of the quote from Psalm 110, Hebrews describes the Messiah enthroned with God in heaven, after completing his work of salvation and awaiting the time when 'his enemies are made a footstool for his feet' (10:13). This means the end times, when Jesus will have complete victory over all evil, and when Satan and the devil will be judged and thrown into the 'lake of fire' (Revelation 20:7-14). In this way, Hebrews tells us that the death of Jesus has eternal consequences which are guaranteed, and goes on; 'He has now made it eternally possible for those who are being made holy to become perfect.' (10:14). This is an incredibly powerful truth. We who have been saved by Jesus can have complete confidence that whatever problems and trials we experience, if we follow our Lord and allow Him to make us ever more holy, then at the end of time, He will complete this work in us. We will then be holy and complete before God! This is the reality of our future, and though none of us would claim to be 'holy' now, we have confidence that Christ will make us so, before God.

Hebrews then brings us back to Jeremiah's prophecy; 'I will no longer remember their sins and their lawlessness' (10:17) because as the prophet says, God's laws are written 'on our hearts' (10:16). Only we can say whether this is true for us, but we all know that whilst we live this life, sin is an on-going problem, even though we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Does this mean that Christ's sacrifice for our salvation was somehow not sufficient? Not at all, for the problem lies with us, not with God. When God says that He 'no longer remembers' our sin (10:17), we may think this means that God forgets our sins, but it means more than this. The word 'to remember' means more in Scripture than it normally means in English; it means 'to call to mind in order to do something'. Our text therefore means that God does not have to do anything more about our sins than what He has already done in Christ, and when we sin, our task is to take this back to Jesus and ask for His forgiveness. Moreover, because we know that Jesus has died for us 'once for all', we can therefore have full assurance that Jesus will forgive us. This is a precious truth which many of us know, but cannot explain; and Hebrews helps us to explain it.

The two Scripture quotes in this text occur more than once in Hebrews, but they do so for a good reason, which is to teach us important truths about God's work of salvation in Christ.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How easy do you find it to think of yourself as being on a path of 'becoming holy'? How does Jesus help us in this?
2. Why do you think that Hebrews says that the Holy Spirit testifies to the covenant that God writes upon our hearts? What can this mean?
3. Why do Christian people continue to have problems with sin?

Discipleship

Every disciple of Jesus Christ will value spending time reflecting upon what will happen at the completion of time, when Jesus comes in glory and God will remake all Creation in perfection. There are many passages of Scripture which deal with this, not least the book of the Revelation of John. Much of this is difficult to understand, but if we hold on to the fact that God's intentions for us are good not bad, there is no reason why we should fear it.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for the wonderful truths we find in Your Word. Help us to take hold of them and treasure them, so that we may know the truth of Your love and compassion for all Your creation. Then when we find ourselves in troubled waters, guide us to think about what is good, and bring us safely back into Your ways again. Thank You Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN