

JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 16



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 16
SEPTEMBER 18, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.



WEEK 16

HEBREWS 10:1-18



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DAY 1 PERFECTED THROUGH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 10:1-4.

Perfection in the Bible isn't about being without flaws. Rather it's about "a state of right relationship with God" (Guthrie, 327). Often, as in Hebrews 10:1, the Greek word for perfect is *telos*. It conveys the idea of wholeness, completion, or fruition. And so, as the tabernacle was a whisper of the *telos* of "**the heavenly things**" (see 8:5), so too the law is "**but a shadow**" of the *telos* of justification (v.1).

The reason the law doesn't make us whole is because "**it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**" (v.4). The blood of animals was always meant to point worshippers to the blood of another. It's only through the blood of Jesus that our sins are taken away and "**make perfect those who draw near**" (v.1, see also Isaiah 27:9). You see, to take away sin is to remove sin's crushing load. An animal can't do that. Jesus alone invites "**all who labor and are heavy laden**" with sin to take his yoke and his burden, which is easy and light (Matthew 11:29-30).

This is striking because our rest comes not from being without burden but from being in relationship with Jesus. That's our *telos*. It's about Jesus' removing the burden of sin and placing on us his burden of righteousness; a joyful burden he shares with us, through right relationship with God.

We're perfected through Christ.

DAY 1 PERFECTED THROUGH CHRIST

1. What does it say about God that he gives us signs and “reminders” about himself and his Word?
2. Why do you think we’re so prone to believe doing (the law) makes us perfect?
3. What do you think it means to carry the burden of righteousness? Why doesn’t this crush us like sin’s burden?

Heavenly Father ...

Forgive me for continually trusting in my behavior and actions to make me whole and complete. I confess, only your Son makes me perfect through relationship with you. Help me to live under this liberating burden today.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

DAY 2 FULFILLED THROUGH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 10:5-7.

We are a culture obsessed with being ourselves and becoming our best selves. We think that's how we'll find fulfillment and happiness. This popular impulse reveals that, while we certainly value community, we believe our identity is discovered and forged in isolation.

Professor Alan Noble develops this observation in his book, *You Are Not Your Own*. He explains, "If I am my own and belong to myself, the first and most significant implication is that I am wholly responsible for my life" (19). Therefore it's up to us to not only discover who we are by searching our interior worlds, but also it's up to us to become the fullest expression of ourselves possible.

Christianity espouses a much different idea about our identity and actualization. First of all, when the Son of God became a human being, he didn't come to *prove* himself, but to *offer* himself. Jesus came not to perform **"sacrifices and offerings"** to God but rather to give his very body in love (v.5-6). Secondly, his coming as a human being wasn't about self-actualization but surrender. Jesus **"came into the world"** to do the will of his Heavenly Father (v.5,7).

So as followers of Jesus, when it comes to knowing ourselves we look outward (to God) rather than inward (to ourselves). When it comes to flourishing, we die to ourselves rather than strive to become our best selves. What Hebrews tells us about Jesus, Jesus tells us about us; **"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"** (Matthew 16:25). We're fulfilled through Christ.

DAY 2 FULFILLED THROUGH CHRIST

1. Why do you think God doesn't want us to define, actualize, and become on our own (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?
2. In what ways are you prone to discover yourself and strive for yourself?
3. How does Jesus' way of being bring you clarity, comfort, and joy?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you that I don't have to discover and strive to be fulfilled. Thank you that I can trust and rest in you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3 SANCTIFIED THROUGH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 10:8-10.

Okay, this is odd. Through Moses, God set up the old system which was comprised of both sacrifices and offerings (see Exodus 3:18). What's more, as early as Adam and Eve we hear whispers of God's plan to make peace through the substitution of an animal (see Genesis 3:21). But Hebrews is telling us God **"neither desired nor [took] pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings"** (v.8). You see, that's odd. *Why would God establish something he didn't want in the first place?*

Well, we've been learning that ultimately he did **"away with the first in order to establish the second"** (v.9). While that may not answer the question, it does remind us that the sacrifices weren't about the sacrifices. They were a means to an end. They were telling a story. God was after something else. This tension helps us see "heartfelt devotion as an essential component of true worship" (Guthrie, 328). In other words, God never wanted or enjoyed our sacrifices in and of themselves. He didn't want works and performance. He wanted our hearts. He wanted us. That's because God isn't simply concerned with our justification, but our sanctification.

Life with God isn't simply about crossing a line from death to life, but about becoming whole and perfect in Christ (v.10). Sanctification is the "process of transformation into Christlikeness which extends throughout our days" (*Theology for the Community of God*, 440). That's what God loves. That's what he has desired all along. He wants us to be sanctified through Christ.

DAY 3 SANCTIFIED THROUGH CHRIST

1. Why do you think God wants us to be sanctified?
2. What's attractive about legalism (doing) as opposed to sanctification (becoming)?
3. In what ways is God making you more like Christ right now?

Heavenly Father ...

Rules are comfortable to me. Rules make sense and give me clear and instant feedback. But rules are deceptive. Sacrifices and offerings and hustle are not what you want. You want my surrender, my heart, my devotion. Help me to trust the truth of your sanctifying love for me today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4 FINISHED THROUGH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 10:11-14.

Every priest stands every day. But Christ, after he ***“offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,”*** he sits down (v.12). He sits at God’s right hand.

Christ’s posture is a theme throughout Hebrews. From the outset, the writer tells us that after Christ made purification for sins ***“he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”*** (1:3). Now, the obvious implication of sitting down is that he has finished his sacrificial work as our Great High Priest (see 4:14). That’s true for all of us. When our work is done for the day, we sit too ... perhaps to watch our favorite show. But it’s more than that. You see, the work of purification is the role of a priest. But the seat next to God—the one at the Majesty’s right hand—is reserved for the king. He’s not only at rest, he also reigns.

While these two realities may seem counterintuitive, they produce similar assurance within believers. If Christ is at rest, we can rest too. If Christ reigns, we can trust that, *for all time*, Christ is in control over all things. Christ’s work is finished and therefore we’re finished through him.

DAY 4 FINISHED THROUGH CHRIST

1. How does Christ's posture impact your view of salvation?
What about your life?
2. In what ways do you struggle to trust that the work of salvation is complete?
3. How would you live differently if you remembered that Jesus Christ is resting and reigning (right now!) over all things?

Heavenly Father ...

Your Son is at rest, help me to rest. Your Son is reigning, help me to trust.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5 FORGIVEN THROUGH CHRIST

First read Hebrews 10:15-18.

One way the Bible explains forgiveness is through the metaphor of memory. Generations before Hebrews was written, the Holy Spirit spoke this way through Jeremiah. He promised that the law would be written on the heart and mind, not simply on stone tablets. Once this happens, we're promised the Lord will ***"remember [our] sins and ... lawless deeds no more"*** (v.17).

Now, this doesn't technically mean God forgets. Rather, that he forgives. It's a metaphor. Meaning, that when the Lord forgives us he no longer sees us through our sin but rather through, what theologians call, the "imputed righteousness" of his Son, Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Sixteenth-century theologian Martin Luther described this as "the glorious exchanged." Our sin is laid on Christ. Christ's righteousness is laid on us.

While the writer has explored this idea before, here he explains that the implication of this metaphorical loss of memory is ***"there is no longer any offering for sin"*** (v.18). Forgiveness puts an end to sacrifice because forgiveness puts an end to the reign of sin.

This has massive implications for the way we construct our own understanding of forgiveness. You see, the promise of the new covenant is a new relationship with God and therefore a new relationship with forgiveness. We can and should learn new habits of reconciliation in which a single act of forgiveness is sufficient for peace. We shouldn't hold things over people's heads, keep a record of wrongs, or see people through their sins when we've forgiven them (see 1 Corinthians 13:1). If we've been forgiven through Christ, we can forgive others. We can forget too.


DAY 5 FORGIVEN THROUGH CHRIST

1. What does God's "forgetfulness" reveal about his character?
2. Are you prone to "remember" people's sins? Why or why not?
3. How does Christ's give you an example of forgiveness and empower you to forgive?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you that no more sacrifices are necessary and that you don't remember my sins. Empower me to forgive others the way you have forgiven me.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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