Christmas 1 Hebrews 2:10-18
December 26, 2021 53-441-38-64

Take Christmas with You Into the New Year
I. Here is your perfect Savior.
II. Here is our peace and strength.
III. Here is our faithful God.

Dear Christian friends,

One holiday down, **one to go**. Christmas has that LONG BUILD-UP and then in one day it's **all over**. Now we're just days away from the **start** of a new year. Soon enough it's **back to school** and the OLD ROUTINE.

One holiday down, one to go. Let's not take that attitude. Let's enjoy BOTH holidays. TAKE CHRISTMAS WITH YOU INTO THE NEW YEAR! Do that **because** 1)**here** is our perfect Savior, 2)**here** is our peace and strength and 3)**here** is our faithful God.

I. Here is our perfect Savior.

This letter was written to Hebrew – **Jewish** – Christians. Being Christians had BROUGHT HARDSHIPS and **persecutions** into their lives. **Being Christians** had caused strains in their **families** and **among old friends** and neighbors. Being Christians had brought stares and **ridicule** – EVEN THE LOSS of their property. It didn't look like it was going to **get any better**. They were really tempted to **go back** to the old ways and get rid of the **headaches** and **hassles** of being Christians.

That's still a temptation, isn't it? **Living a Christian** – a CHRIST-CENTERED – Christ-PLEASING – life isn't easy. We don't face jail or **loss of property** but there is still the ridicule. IT'S HARD day after day to ***"deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus."*** So people give up being Christians – and it's NOT JUST the **young** people. People FALL for the ways and attitudes of the world – "GOD CAN'T TELL me what to believe or how to live my life." **Rather** than CHANGE their ways they **change** their faith – they DROP their Savior and church.

What we need to do is **what these Hebrew Christians** needed to do – take another look at **what God gave** us at Christmas – OUR PERFECT SAVIOR.

We see the Baby Jesus. That Baby is the eternal Son of God IN THE FLESH. We must be clear about that. A Savior who IS NOT GOD is **no Savior** at all. We **must be** JUST AS CLEAR that our Savior is also a true man – the ***"firstborn Son"*** of the Virgin Mary – ***"the Word become flesh."*** Our divine Savior is our BROTHER. ***"Since the children share flesh and blood, He also (Jesus) shared the same flesh and blood."***

TAKE CHRISTMAS with you into the new year because here is our **perfect Savior**. As we close out another year we look back over it. We're reminded here that ***"everything exists for God."*** We were created to SERVE and GLORIFY God in everything we do. Does that pretty well describe your life in **2021**? We hear Jesus say here, ***"I will trust in Him."*** How many times this year haven't we worried and FRETTED and STEWED – got all worked up about whatever – instead of ***"trusting"*** our heavenly Father and His promises? We hear Jesus say, ***"Within the congregation I will sing Your praise."*** WHAT'S GOD'S OPINION of your worship life this year and your use of His Word? A NEW YEAR brought with it the **same old sins**. 2022 will be no different. It's still true that "WE DAILY SIN MUCH and **indeed deserve nothing** but punishment."

That's why we TAKE CHRISTMAS with us into the new year! Jesus is ***"the author of our salvation."*** We don't save ourselves. Jesus DID IT ALL for us. **In our place** Jesus lived a sinless life – perfectly obeying **all** the commandments for us. And THEN HE WENT to the cross! To these Hebrew Christians

who had **grown up** with priests and sacrifices these words were especially meaningful. ***"He (Jesus) would be a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, so that He could pay for the sins of the people."***

God doesn't find our sins CUTE – they make God angry. He doesn't accept our **excuses**. The only appropriate punishment is the **death** and **eternal damnation** of the guilty sinner. Yet LOOK WHO DIED! OT worship focused on the PERFECT, INNOCENT LAMB DYING **in the place** of the sinful people. It was a perfect picture of Jesus and His cross. Jesus – the innocent, **sinless** Son of God – was punished for the sins of the whole world. Jesus sacrificed His holy life as ***"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."*** Jesus died – **we live**. Jesus is forsaken – **we are forgiven**. Jesus goes through hell on the cross – we're promised eternal life in heaven in Him.

TAKE CHRISTMAS with you **because** here is the forgiveness we need for this PAST YEAR. Here is the forgiveness we WILL NEED **each day** of the new year – forgiveness FULL and FREE in Jesus' shed blood.

TAKE CHRISTMAS with you into the new year because…

II. Here is our strength and peace.

ALL IN ALL 2021 was as Solomon once said, ***"nothing new under the sun."*** The same can be said of the coming new year. That's why we want to TAKE CHRISTMAS with us. We **have here** three good reasons to do that. Reason #1 – ***"Because He (Jesus) suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted."***

Every day in 2022 the DEVIL will still be ***"prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** The WORLD will still be tempting us with its GOD-DEFYING PROMISES of **fun** and **good times**. Our SINFUL NATURES never do get **any better**. Those three team up and it's a real struggle to live a **God-pleasing** life. It can be so frustrating. With a BIG SIGH we say with Paul, ***"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am!"***

TAKE CHRISTMAS with you **because** it's our strength **against temptation**. Jesus is here to help us – He's BEEN THROUGH this. **While** Jesus had no sinful nature and we can't fully understand **how** Jesus could be tempted – He did face REAL temptations. **Just think** of how the devil personally came after Jesus.

But Jesus isn't simply a SHOULDER **to cry on**. He is DIVINE HELP. **Day after day** Jesus forgives us. **Day after day** He strengthens us through His means of grace. The more we use God's Word and Sacraments the MORE OUR LIVES will be focused on Jesus. The MORE SURE we are of God's love and **forgiveness** the stronger we'll be against temptation. FOCUSED ON Jesus and **all He's done** and **promised** us we find the strength to ***"crucify our sinful natures"*** – to SAY NO to the devil and the world.

Here's another good reason to TAKE CHRISTMAS with you into the new year. Jesus ***"shared the same flesh and blood*** (that we have)***, so that through death He could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death."***

We've almost made it through another year. WHO KNOWS about next year. I'm sure we'll **have to deal** with death again – either our own or of **loved ones** and friends. HOW are we going to do that? BY TAKING CHRISTMAS with us!

Thank God we HAVE CHRISTMAS! The Son of God took on our ***"flesh and blood so that by His (own) death"*** He might defeat death and the devil for us. The promises are SO FAMILIAR. They've sustained us in the past. They'll still be good in the new year. ***"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. My sheep listen to My voice …I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."*** If 2022 is the year I die THAT MEANS it's the year I go to heaven! That would certainly make it a HAPPY new year for me!

Here's a third reason to TAKE CHRISTMAS with you into the new year. ***"He who sanctifies (Jesus) and those who are being sanctified (you and me) all have one Father. For that reason, He (Jesus) is not ashamed to call them (us) brothers."*** Washed clean in Jesus' blood – clothed with Jesus' holy life – we now STAND HOLY in God's sight. **Because of Christmas** we have a whole new relationship with God and a whole new way of life. Others may call us **all kinds** of things but JESUS CALLS us His ***"brothers and sisters."***

Here's one final reason to TAKE CHRISTMAS with us into the new year…

III. Here's our faithful God.

Christmas is a GOOD LESSON on God's ways. To the **human mind** God's ways can LOOK STUPID. It can look **as if** God DOESN'T KNOW what He's doing or that He DOESN'T CARE about us. That's not true but that's EXACTLY what the devil wants us to think!

Nothing seems more stupid that **God's plan** of salvation. A virgin having a Baby **who is God**. A dead body coming back to life. A Book written by **sinful men** is GOD'S PERFECT WORD. With simple bread and wine Jesus actually gives us the **very same** body and blood that He gave into death on the cross. RIDICULOUS!

Did you understand everything GOD DID in **2021**? God tells us, ***"As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways."*** We're told here, ***"It was fitting for God …in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to His goal through sufferings."*** Don't overlook that word ***"fitting."*** It's NOT FOR US TO SAY what God can or can't do – what's WORTHY or **unworthy** of God. God knows WHAT HE'S DOING!

Don't also overlook those words ***"bring to His goal."*** God is working all things according to HIS PLANS and **His schedule**. That includes this **past year** and the **coming new** year. Some days may FIND US SCRATCHING our heads **wondering what** God is up to. But one day God will make everything clear. IF NOT NOW then in heaven. **In the meantime** we follow the example of our Savior and say, ***"I will trust in Him."***

So TAKE CHRISTMAS with you into the new year and that will make it a **happy** new year. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED