

Bible Passage

Hebrews 8:6-13

⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel

and with the house of Judah,

⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Outline

1. The Legacy of the Old Covenant

- a. **Foundation of the Covenant:** God's deep desire for a meaningful relationship with His creation, formalized through covenants.
- b. **Terms and Expectations:** God's promise to lead, protect, and bless His people, conditioned on their adherence to His laws and commandments.
- c. **The Chosen and Their Struggle:** The example of Abraham's descendants, bound by laws yet frequently faltering, showcasing humanity's struggle to uphold the covenant.
- d. **Human Perspective vs. Divine Patience:** The logical human inclination to end a repeatedly broken relationship versus God's enduring patience.

2. The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

- a. **Shift from Human Effort to Divine Grace:** Introduction of the New Covenant characterized by God's grace and mercy, transcending human logic.
- b. **Role of Jesus and His Sacrifice:** Jesus as the embodiment of the New Covenant, bridging the human-divine gap and offering forgiveness without Old Covenant prerequisites.
- c. **A Relationship Rooted in Grace:** Moving beyond a reciprocal effort to a relationship based on divine love and sacrifice.
- d. **Preserving the Old Covenant's Value:** Acknowledging the continuing relevance of the

Old Covenant as a reminder of human imperfection and divine standards.

3. The Continuity and Promises of God

- a. **Heart-Centered Relationship with God:** The New Covenant's focus on an internalized, personal relationship with God through Jesus' teachings.
- b. **The Concept of Forgiveness:** Emphasis on forgiveness in the Christian context as an acknowledgment of wrongs and a path to restoration with God.
- c. **Living as a New Creation 'in Christ':** Understanding our identity as a new creation in Christ, focusing on grace, reconciliation, and being ambassadors of Christ's love.
- d. **Choice and Kingdom Building:** The freedom to choose a life aligned with God's will and purposes, exemplified by Jesus' conversation with Peter about feeding His sheep.
- e. **Redefining Sin in the New Covenant:** Recognizing sin not as a separator but as actions that detract from a life aligned with God.
- f. **The Great Commission and the Great Commandments:** The future focus on fulfilling the Great Commission through the lens of loving God and others, promoting a gospel of love and reconciliation over legalism.

Notes

God, as the creator, cherishes His creation deeply and desires a meaningful relationship with it. This relationship is formalized through covenants, which lay out the terms and expectations of this divine-human interaction. Initially, the covenants were explicit in their expectations: God would lead, protect, and bless His people, but in return, they needed to adhere to His laws and commandments. This was evident in God's relationship with Abraham and his descendants, who were chosen and bound by these laws to maintain their relationship with God. However, over time, it became increasingly clear that humanity struggled to uphold their end of the covenant. Despite being chosen, the Israelites frequently faltered, breaking the commandments and failing to live up to God's expectations. If I were in God's position, seeing constant failure and disregard from humanity, the logical response might be to end the relationship. This human perspective underscores the struggle in maintaining such a covenant where both parties are expected to meet certain standards.

Contrary to human logic, God introduces a new paradigm in His relationship with humanity. This shift is marked by the advent of the New Covenant, which is characterized not by human effort to reach God but by God's infinite grace and mercy. The New Covenant, embodied by Jesus and his sacrifice, represents God's willingness to bridge the gap entirely, offering forgiveness and a renewed relationship without the strict prerequisites of the Old

Covenant. This new arrangement is not about reciprocal effort but is anchored in the concept of grace. God, in His perfection and holiness, chooses to come down to humanity's level, offering a relationship that isn't contingent on human righteousness but on divine love and sacrifice. This covenant is celebrated as a superior promise, offering a more accessible and grace-filled path to divine relationship. It's crucial to note that the Old Covenant, with its laws and commandments, still holds value. It serves as a reminder of human imperfection and the lofty standards of holiness and righteousness that are humanly unattainable but are perfectly embodied by God. The law, though not a means to salvation in the New Covenant, still reflects God's holiness and the ideal of human conduct.

The core of this message revolves around the New Covenant, which marks a significant shift from the Old Covenant's legalistic approach to a more personal, heart-centered relationship with God. This New Covenant, underscored by Jesus's life and sacrifice, brings a profound understanding that the law is now inscribed on our hearts, not merely imposed externally. Reflecting on various religious experiences, legalism often overshadows the true essence of faith. Practices in churches, dictated more by tradition and subjective interpretations than by scriptural mandates, tend to create an environment of judgment and restriction, focusing more on what is perceived as 'right' or 'wrong' rather than on the underlying principles of love and grace.

A pivotal aspect of the New Covenant is the concept of forgiveness. Unlike merely acknowledging wrongdoing, forgiveness in the Christian context starts with recognizing the fault and then transcending it through understanding and compassion. It's about acknowledging the wrong but also understanding that Jesus has borne the consequences of these wrongs, offering a pathway to restoration and reconciliation with God. The transformative power of Christ's sacrifice is central to this new understanding. It shifts the focus from human efforts to bridge the gap between humanity and God to a recognition that God, through Jesus, has already closed this gap. This unconditional love and acceptance are what sets Christianity apart, offering a unique perspective on divine-human relationships. The New Covenant liberates believers from the fear of abandonment by God due to sin. It emphasizes that nothing can separate us from God's love – not our actions, nor our failures. This covenant is not about earning God's love through deeds; it's about accepting that love and wanting to be in a relationship with Him.

Being 'in Christ' signifies a new creation, a transformation that goes beyond the superficial adherence to laws. It is about embodying Christ's spirit, living in a state of grace and reconciliation, both with God and with others. This new identity in Christ changes how we view ourselves and our actions, focusing on being ambassadors of Christ's love and reconciliation in the world. In the light of the New Covenant, Christians are called to love and forgive others, reflecting the forgiveness they have received from God. This

act of forgiving is not just a moral obligation; it's a sharing of the grace that has been bestowed upon them. It's an understanding that as God has forgiven us, so we are to extend that forgiveness to others.

The common misconception in religious life is that our actions, like loving others or adhering to certain practices, somehow earn us a better connection with God. It challenges this legalistic view, reinforcing the idea that God listens and is close to us, not because of what we do but simply because of His enduring love and grace.

The analogy of a parent's unconditional love for their children, regardless of their path in life, demonstrates God's unwavering love for us. Even if we stray or find ourselves in life's 'prisons,' God remains with us as a constant, loving presence. This metaphor highlights the essence of the New Covenant – our unbreakable status as God's children, no matter our circumstances. While God's love and presence are unconditional, we are still presented with choices. Whether we choose the limitations of a 'prison' – a life apart from God's will – or the freedom and joy of living in God's kingdom. This choice isn't about fear of losing our status as God's children but about choosing a life that aligns with His love and purposes.

Echoing Jesus' conversation with Peter, the message here is that our love for God is expressed through our actions – not as a condition of God's love, but as a natural response to it. Loving God means feeding His sheep, caring for others, and building His kingdom. This isn't a legalistic requirement but a joyful expression of our relationship with God. In this

context, sin is redefined not as an act that creates a chasm between us and God, but rather as actions that do not benefit us in our walk with God. Since the gap has been closed by Christ, sin does not separate us from God, but it can lead us away from the fullness of life He offers. Looking ahead, the upcoming focus on fulfilling the Great Commission through the Great Commandments – loving God and loving each other. This approach suggests that evangelism and spreading the gospel should stem from a place of love and reconciliation, not obligation or legalism.