

### **Jesus is the Mediator of a Better Covenant**

The New Covenant of the Christian faith is superior in every way to the the Old Covenant

**Opening Prayer & Introduction:** Hebrews chapter 8 is a rich chapter that serves as the capstone of the Hebrew lessons thus far, with special regard for Jesus as the high priest of the Christian faith. The writer shows us that the Christian Faith (New Covenant) is superior to the Mosaic covenant in every way. It was baffling to the writers of the New Testament that anyone would turn back from Jesus and return to works and rules based Judaism. One idea that stood out is that the Old Covenant pointed forward to the New one, but only gave us pictures and shadows of a reality that would be realized in Jesus. The writer went to great lengths to show the Hebrews that Jesus was the superior path, and to encourage them to stay the course.

**Key Idea:** Pastor Joel noted that the Old Covenant is inferior to the New Covenant in three specific ways...

1. It was a copy or shadow of what was to come (not the real thing)
2. It was imperfect and couldn't actually save anyone
3. It is now obsolete and has been replaced by something better

**Illustrations from the Sermon:** Pastor Joel gave us several illustrations to help us understand the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant. Thinking about these illustrations can help to bring clarity to the discussion.

1. The Bed Illustration: The pastor used the example of his adjustable bed to illustrate not wanting to go back to the old way. What resonated with you about this comparison to the old and new covenants?
2. Copy vs. Original: How does understanding that the Old Testament sacrifices were a "shadow" or "copy" of Jesus' sacrifice change your perspective on the Old Testament? (Reference verses 4-5)
3. Obsolete Items: The pastor reminded us of a number of obsolete items, like a rotary telephone, that have become outdated and are functionally obsolete. How did thinking about those old things that are no longer in use help you to understand that the Old Covenant is outdated for Christians today?
4. The Credit Card Analogy: The pastor explained that Old Testament believers were saved "on credit" that was paid when Jesus died. God "credited" their faith as righteousness, and Jesus paid the bill at the cross. How does this help you understand God's plan of salvation throughout all of history?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In what ways might Christians today be tempted to go back to "old covenant" thinking—relying on rules, rituals, or our own works rather than resting in Christ's finished work?

2. According to verses 10-12, what are the specific promises of the new covenant? Which of these promises is most meaningful to you personally and why?
  - God's laws written on our minds and hearts
  - Personal relationship with God
  - Direct access to God (no need for a human priest)
  - Complete forgiveness and mercy
3. Why do you think it's so hard for people to fully trust in Jesus alone rather than adding their own works or religious practices? What does this reveal about human nature?
4. How does understanding that Old Testament believers were saved by faith through God's forbearance change your view of salvation history and God's redemptive plan?
5. What does it mean practically for the Holy Spirit to write God's laws on our hearts rather than having them written in a book, and how should this transform our daily obedience?

### **Personal Applications:**

1. Self-Examination: Are there areas in your spiritual life where you're trying to earn God's favor through your own efforts rather than resting in Christ's finished work? What would it look like to surrender those areas fully to Jesus?
2. Freedom in Christ: How should understanding the new covenant change the way we:
  - Approach God in prayer?
  - Deal with guilt and shame over past sins?
  - Serve and worship God?
3. Sharing the Gospel: How can understanding the superiority of the new covenant help you explain the gospel to someone who thinks Christianity is just another religion of rules and rituals?

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Salvation has always been by grace through faith, never by keeping the law
- The Holy Spirit now lives in believers, writing God's law on our hearts
- We have direct access to God through Jesus, our High Priest
- Our sins are truly forgiven and forgotten, not just covered temporarily
- Going back to works-based religion is foolish when we have the real thing in Jesus

**Closing Prayer:** Pray that God would help you to rest in the finished work of Jesus. In the New Covenant, our works are a response to God's grace and not a means to obtain it. Christians rest in the finished work of Jesus while working from a place of love and obedience. God works in us to sanctify us, but this is a response to our belonging to Him and not a means of obtaining God. Spend some time reflecting on your understanding of the gospel, making sure that it aligns with these truths.