

Sermon Transcript

01.11.2025

Hebrews 7:20-22

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- Good morning and happy 2026! Please open your Bibles to Hebrews 7 vs. 20.
- As you do, I want to tell you about my near death experience this past week as I got run over by a car while riding my bike.
- This past Tuesday morning I had breakfast with a visitor and since we were meeting just a couple of miles from my house I thought I would ride my bike. So that's what I did. It was about 25 degrees that morning so I bundled up and set off and enjoyed the cool and quiet of the morning.
- I got there early and had breakfast with the guy and then headed home and on the way, I saw a car stopped on a commercial driveway. They were stopped and waiting to turn and I didn't make eye contact to ensure that they saw me, I simply assumed that they were paying attention and that was not a safe assumption apparently.
- As I passed in front, all of a sudden the car lurched forward and slammed into me. The next few minutes felt like a slo-mo shot in a movie.
- My bike fell to the ground, but I managed to end up on hood. In fact, I slid across the hood and landed on my feet like Bo Duke. I instantly felt really cool for sliding across the hood and really dumb for getting hit by a car.
- Thankfully, I didn't hit my head or ribs. Just a little bruise and cut on my leg and a whole lot of adrenaline nausea for the next hour.
- Also, happily, the driver stuck around and she was very apologetic and shaken up.
- And here is where I might have made a calculated error. I decided to not get the cops and insurance involved. I had a moment of empathy when I thought I would do unto others what I would want them to do to me. I hate the fact that my insurance rates have gone up though Kaci and I haven't had an accident or gotten a ticket in decades.
- Had I been hurt or had my bike been totaled, I would have responded differently, but I figured the worst that would happen would be that I'm out a couple hundred dollars to fix a broken wheel if she'd reneged on her promise to pay for my repairs. Even as I said it, I knew the risks.
- There is a reason that contracts exist. There is a reason that it is generally best to involve police and insurance. People aren't honest, people aren't trustworthy.
- That's why we swear and promise and sign stuff and provide evidence. We need those things because of a deficiency in our character.
- And that reminds me of our text today where we will once again see the language of God swearing an oath, not for his sake, but ours. Not because He is weak, but we are.
- So let's pray and then we'll dive in together.
- Self, others, me.

- Its been a few weeks so let's ease back into Hebrews with some context.
- By now, you should grasp the central theme of the book which is the supremacy, the superiority of Christ. Christ is better than the angels and Moses and Joshua, but in particular, He's a better high priest who has offered a better sacrifice and established a better covenant built upon better promises guaranteeing better rewards.

- And remember how this functions in the book. The Hebrews are being persecuted and so they face the temptation to recant, to apostatize, to go back to Judaism and the seeming safety of the synagogue.
- So the supremacy of Christ functions to show the folly & futility of going back. Like Israel going back to Egypt, for the Church to go from Christ back to Moses would be a major downgrade. It would be to go from Christianity to Judaism, from freedom to slavery, from power to impotence, from better to worse.
- Starting in chapter 7, the author really begins to press into the meaning of Christ's priesthood. And he does so by going back to a passage that he started referencing back in chapter 1. There he quotes from Psalm 110:1 which says:
 - *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* (Psalm 110:1)
- In Hebrews 1, that Christ was told to sit at God's right hand was used to establish His superiority to the angels. After all, angels in God's presence hide their eyes & cry out holy, holy, holy, they aren't copping a squat on the throne. They aren't sitting at the right hand of the Almighty.
- As we've said before, Psalm 110 is significant. Its the most quoted OT chapter in the NT. We see it in the gospels, we see it in Paul, and we really see it all over the place in Hebrews.
- And if you keep reading the Psalm, verse 4 says:
 - *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* (Psalm 110:4)
- So we've already devoted a handful of sermons to exploring the meaning of this passage. Who was Melchizedek? What is unique about his priesthood? How does it compare and contrast to the Levitical priesthood? How does it function as a type or shadow or picture of Christ's priesthood? We've walked through all of that already.
- In vss 1-3 Jesus is compared to Melchizedek. He is a priestly king...the king of righteousness and king of peace, and He has a perpetual priesthood, without beginning or end.
- Then in vss. 4-10 we saw Abraham contrasted with Melchizedek to establish a parallel. As Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, so Christ, the priest after the order of Melchizedek, is greater than Abraham's offspring.
- For all of their effort, for all of their work, the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood could not actually suffice to provide access to God. As we've talked about before, the temple and the sacrifices and the courts and curtains all instead communicated God's holiness and transcendence and served as a reminder of our inability to enter. Like a sign in the yard saying trespassers will be shot, so the entire OT temple edifice communicated the inaccessibility of God.
- As Hebrews 10:3-4 says
 - *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:3-4)
- But what Aaron couldn't do, Christ has done. The OT sacrifices provided a constant reminder of sin whereas Christ's sacrifice provides a reminder of forgiveness.
- In the OT, no one except the high priest could enter into the holy of holy and he himself could only do so once a year and only after elaborate preparation, but Christ has not only entered, but He's entered the substance and not the shadow, He's entered heaven itself and not just the representation of heaven, and he's entered and pulled up a chair and he's torn down the curtain, the veil separating us from God, and he's anchored us to the throne of grace, and He's invited us to come! Talk about rolling out the red carpet!
- That's how Christ's priesthood is better.

- Then in vss. 11-19, we see that a change in the priesthood necessitates a change in the law. After all, the Mosaic Law mandated a Levitical priesthood so for a non-Levite to be priest, the law must be changed.
- And as we've mentioned before, this serves the author's overarching theological distinction between law and promise. The Law was seen as something temporal, transient, mutable, whereas God's promises are eternal and immutable.
- If that doesn't make sense, go back and listen to the previous sermons. Hebrews is not like a sitcom that you can just occasionally check back in on and understand what's happening. You don't have to watch the first 3 episodes of season 3 of the Office or Parks and Rec in order to understand episode 4 most of the time.
- But Hebrews is more akin to a serialized show like 24 or Yellowstone or some soap opera where if you miss an episode or two you might be totally lost.
- So hopefully you've been following along and today we want to continue to work through the implications of God's promises, so let's turn to vs. 20.

And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath... (Hebrews 7:20)

- This seems like a strange way to start a paragraph. To understand what he's saying, we need to go back to verses 18-19
 - *For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:18-19)*
- So we see a contrast between commandment and hope, between weakness and power. As we talked about then, the weakness and uselessness of the law is related to its function. The author isn't saying that the law was good for nothing, but that it was useless for the purpose of providing perfection which we have seen relates to the idea of providing access to God. The law was useless and weak in that sense.
- Now you may recall a principle of Jewish hermeneutics or interpretation that said, if it isn't in the Torah, it doesn't exist. We saw that applied to Melchizedek's genealogy. Since Moses doesn't include any family tree for the king in Genesis, it's almost as if he didn't have one. Not literally, but literarily, he was without beginning or end.
- Well, we come across the same principle here. Namely, the author is inferring significance from the fact that there's no oath in Scripture regarding the installation of Levitical priests. They were ordained without God swearing them in. According to Jewish traditional interpretation, if you didn't read it, it didn't happen. The fact that God didn't swear an oath to the Levites is relevant.
- On the other hand, Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is established on the basis of an oath, a promise.
- And the author has already explored the significance of divine oaths back in chapter 6. In vss. 17-18 we read:
 - *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:17-18)*
- As we talked about then, an oath isn't necessary for God's sake, but ours. The problem isn't that God is untrustworthy, but that we are distrustful.

- We lie, we fail to live up to our word, so we make promises as a way of trying to confirm our intent. And God condescends to use the same language for our sake, due to the weakness of our flesh. And that's a theme we've seen throughout the book as well. God condescends to help His people. He doesn't just stand aloof and offer help from the heavens, He incarnates in the person of His son and stands in the muck and mire and pulls us out of the mess we've made.
- So God's promises are another form of divine condescension, of God's taking on the weakness of mankind. He makes promises for our sake, to confirm and underscore the unalterable character of His plan and purpose.
- So Christ's priesthood is perpetual, immutable, unchanging, unfailing. It will not fail because it cannot fail because God cannot lie.
- But no such promise accompanied the Levitical priesthood. As we see in Exodus 29:35
 - *Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Through seven days shall you ordain them...* (Exodus 29:35)
- The Levitical or Aaronic priesthoods were established by simple command, by law. And as the law changed, so did the priesthood. But God's promises are unlike the OT law. God's promises are unchanging.
- The author doesn't here mean that the Levitical priesthood was bad or contrary to God's will. Rather, he is suggesting that it had a certain built-in obsolescence.
- What do I mean by built-in or planned obsolescence?
- Well, I remember growing up and going to my great-grandmother's house and using her old rotary phone. From my earliest memories at her house until she moved in with us when I was in high school she had the same phone. She probably had it for 30 years and it still worked fine.
- Imagine trying to use an iPhone for 3 decades now. Literally just a couple of months ago, I ran into an issue where I could not download an app on my iPad because it was too old to handle the software update. That iPad is less than 10 years old and its nearly antiquated.
- This isn't incidental, its intentional. In marketing, its called planned obsolescence. Intentionally limiting the lifespan of a product in order to create constant turnover & consumer dependency.
- Manufacturers could make lightbulbs that last for a lifetime. Ford could make trucks that run for generations. But they don't...at least not anymore. They design their products with a certain deficiency that they can then capitalize on at your literal expense.
- Well, in a much less nefarious way, God has done something similar with the Aaronic priesthood and the temple cult and the Mosaic Law and the sacrifices. He has designed it with a fatal flaw...it was always temporary. It was always a parenthesis in the larger plan. It was always a guardian, a custodian, a babysitter until something better came along.
- He knew long before ordaining the sacrifices of bulls and goats that that blood could never actually atone and yet He ordained it anyway because the point wasn't what they provided, but what they illustrated, what they symbolized, what they pointed toward.
- So God established the priesthood by command instead of promise in order to show that it was provisional and transitory.
- But notice where the analogy of planned obsolescence breaks down. Apple, Samsung, and Chevy all take advantage of the desperate consumer whereas God's intent is different. He didn't design the obsolescence of the Old to replace it with something else that will soon be just as obsolete. He didn't simply change out who and how we offer sacrifices. In effect, He designed the obsolescence for the exact opposite. He made the Old insufficient and temporal in order to highlight the sufficiency and eternality of the New.
- And He did so by means of an oath. We'll read about that oath in vs. 21.

but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’ ” (Hebrews 7:21)

- Bear in mind what the author is doing here. He’s building this entire argument on one little phrase found in Psalm 110. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.
- This is the first time that he’s quoted that part of the Psalm.
- Earlier, he skipped over that phrase. In chapter 5 he writes
 - *as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:6)*
 - *For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 7:17)*
- There the emphasis is on the word forever.
- As we’ve been studying Hebrews, it seems like the author is ransacking and milking the OT text to explore every single conceivable crumb of truth. From 1 word in Ps 110, that the Lord would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. From that one word forever, he managed to flesh out an entire theology of Christ’s perpetuity in contrast with the Aaronic priesthood.
- He spends multiple verses pondering the implications of that one word. Which, by the way, is part of why we aren’t merely working through an entire chapter of Hebrews each week. We’re being slow & deliberate because that seems to be how the author himself approaches the word.
- We saw it in December with forever and this week, he’ll do something similar with the word “sworn.” He squeezes these words to get every last drop of meaning out of them.
- And so Christ is a priest forever, but how do we know forever is forever? The author goes back to the word and reads “the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.”
- Here’s where we need to do some systematic theology. Any time we read the text there is a hermeneutical spiral taking place. Our reading of the text influences our theology and our theology influences our reading of the text. That is inevitable and it is only problematic if we read wrongly or have a wrongly developed theology.
- As someone with rose colored glasses would see red even where red isn’t present, so sometimes we can read something out of a text that God doesn’t intend in the text. This is called eisegesis as opposed to exegesis.
- Eisegesis is reading meaning into the text, exegesis is reading meaning out of the text. Our goal should be exegesis not eisegesis.
- So its important that we read the text correctly and to do that it is helpful to have the right theological lenses. So let’s talk about the question of God changing his mind.
- And in reality, the historic orthodox view is that God never changes His mind. That’s not just the historic Reformed view, that is the historic Christian view. Some Christians today disagree, but they do so standing well outside the stream of Christian tradition which holds that God is omniscient, immutable, & atemporal, He stands over and outside of time so God never changes and He never changes His mind.
- That said, sometimes it appears from our perspective like God has changed his mind.
- For instance, in 1 Samuel 15:11 God says
 - *I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments... (1 Samuel 15:11)*
- That looks like God changes His mind. He regrets. He takes the kingdom from Saul & gives it to David. That seems an awful lot like a changed mind. But then keep reading and you’ll read:
 - *And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret. (1 Samuel 15:29)*

- Unless we want to charge God with contradiction in the span of half a chapter, we need to understand how both of these texts can be true. How can God both regret and not regret?
- And ultimately we'll need to allow our interpretation of one set of texts to influence our interpretation of another.
- So when it comes to the idea of God changing his mind, the historic position of the church is to understand passages that state that God does not and cannot change His mind to be the controlling texts to which we need to conform our understanding of those texts that seem to suggest he does change.
- For instance, look at Numbers 23:19
 - *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Numbers 23:19)*
- Notice that change is something that is true of creatures not Creator. The fact that God doesn't change is owing to the fact that He is not a man.
- As has been said, God is all being, no becoming. Creatures become. We become bigger or smaller or smarter or wiser or older or fatter or prettier or whatever. But God doesn't become anything because becoming is a function of creation, not Creator.
- As the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck writes:
 - "The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no becoming." (Herman Bavinck)
- So why does it appear in certain texts like God does change His mind? Well because from our perspective He does change. And yet from His perspective, even that alleged change was planned and purposed.
- For instance, take Ninevah. God promised destruction by the mouth of Jonah. And yet Ninevah isn't destroyed. And therefore Jonah is annoyed. Why? Because he knew that God would relent. Why would He relent? Because Ninevah repented.
- In other words, Jonah knew the deep magic. He knew the established rule that says that God would relent if any nation repented. We see that fleshed out in Jeremiah 18:5-10
 - *Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. (Jeremiah 18:5-10)*
- So what Jonah said was God is going to destroy Ninevah, but what Jonah meant was God is going to destroy Ninevah UNLESS you repent. That condition wasn't spoken, but it was implied.
- And thus God didn't actually change His mind at all. His intention was always to show mercy to Ninevah. That's the very reason that Jonah is angry. Look at Jonah 4:1-2
 - *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. (Jonah 4:1-2)*

- Jonah knew that God would show mercy. Even as he was proclaiming judgment, he knew the possibility if not probability of grace.
- So, when God relents, it isn't that He is changing His mind at all. Because His mind, His will, His intent is always to relent in the face of repentance. And He often uses the warning of judgment in order to produce that very repentance.
- But occasionally, repentance isn't His endgame, it isn't his intention. As in King Saul's case, he says, I will not change my mind, so to speak. I will not relent. The kingdom will be taken from you regardless of your response.
- In those cases, God might then swear something with an oath to reveal to us that there is nothing happening behind the scenes, no ulterior motive behind God's plans, no way around it.
- Now, what's the point of walking through a bit of the theology of God's immutability, the fact that He doesn't change?
- Because the idea of a changing God is like an acid that will eventually eat through all of His other attributes. If God can change, then that change can be used to undermine any of His attributes.
- For instance, maybe God is sovereign today, but if He can change, maybe He won't be sovereign tomorrow. Maybe he will lose his strength as an old man loses his. Maybe His glory will burn out like a dying star. Or maybe God is holy today, but tomorrow He'll decide unrighteousness would be more fun.
- Again, as Bavinck writes:
 - "Those who predicate any change whatsoever of God, whether with respect to his essence, knowledge, or will, diminish all his attributes: independence, simplicity, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence. This robs God of his divine nature, and religion of its firm foundation and assured comfort." (Herman Bavinck)
- Notice the final sentence there. Predicating change of God not only robs God of His divinity, but also robs us of our hope and assurance. How so?
- Well, if God can change, then yes, you can take comfort in His love today, but how could you rest in future grace? After all, maybe God won't love you tomorrow? How many of you can remember being so in love with a high school sweetheart only for that love to fade and dissipate? What if God falls out of love like us? Maybe God will change His mind about justifying you, sanctifying you, forgiving you.
- As James Dolezal writes in a helpful little book on God's nature,
 - "God's unwavering covenant faithfulness is worthy of our hope precisely because it is rooted in His unwavering and unchangeable being." (James Dolezal, "All that is in God")
- Again, mutability is an acid that eats away at God's nature and our hope. So that's why I wanted to spend a few minutes on it because the author is here building his case on the foundation of God's oath. And if that foundation has cracks in it, then we're in trouble.
- If God can't be trusted to accomplish His word, we might as well go home and not waste our time expositing that word.
- But God can be trusted and not only does God swear, but He promises to never change His mind which means that we can take comfort, we can rest assured, we can have confidence. We can bank on these promises.
- How do we know that God won't remove His spirit from us as he did with Saul? How do we know that God won't change His mind as he seems to do with the Levitical priesthood? How do we know that Jesus isn't a parentheses until some bigger better deal comes along?
- Because he has sworn and will not change His mind.

- There is no future plan apart from Christ. There is no going back on the Melchizedekian priesthood. God will never revoke what He has sworn.
- And if God is never going back on Christ's priesthood, why would we ever be tempted to go back to the Levitical priesthood, an inferior priesthood.
- Why forsake what is better? That's what we see in vs. 22.

This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. (Hebrews 7:22)

- This is the first use of the word covenant in Hebrews although it will become a dominant theme in the next three chapters, appearing another 13 times in chapters 8-10. In fact, over half of the NT uses of the underlying Greek word translated as covenant occur in Hebrews.
- So what is a covenant?
- You can think of a covenant as a solemn formal agreement between two parties that stipulates the nature of a relationship, the obligations of that relationship, and the penalties and rewards associated with that relationship.
- And so God's redemptive plan unfolds by means of covenant. He makes a covenant with Noah to never again destroy the earth by means of flood. He makes a covenant with Abraham and His seed to bless the world. He makes a covenant with Israel at Sinai that we call the Mosaic covenant and He makes a covenant with David that one of His offspring would perpetually sit upon the throne of the kingdom.
- And finally, as the culmination of all of these covenants, the fulfillment of all of God's revelation and relation to mankind, we see what we call the new covenant concerning Christ.
- That phrase new covenant we see even on Jesus' lips.
 - *...This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.* (Luke 22:20)
- And we see it in Paul.
 - *who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant...* (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- But as we'll see in a few weeks in Hebrews 8, the idea of a new covenant is first introduced in the Old Testament. Look at Jeremiah 31:31 which says:
 - *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...* (Jeremiah 31:31)
- Keep reading and we see that this new covenant is:
 - *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, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.* (Jeremiah 31:32)
- So, it isn't only new, but different. Notice the phrase "not like." And as we've often mentioned in Hebrews, the differences that are highlighted in the book are qualitative differences.
- Not only is it a new covenant, a different covenant, but notice here in vs. 22 its a better covenant. As we've mentioned before, this word better plays an important role in the flow of Hebrews. Christ is better is a way to sum up the book.
- In chapter 1, Jesus is better than the angels. The ESV translates it as superior to the angels, but in Greek, its the same word translated as better here. In ch 6, the gospel brings better things. In ch 7, there is a better hope. In ch 8, we'll read of better promises. In ch 9, a better sacrifice. In ch 10, a better possession. In ch 11, a better country and better life. And in ch 12, a better word.
- The word better is like breadcrumbs to follow the author's argument connecting what might seem to be disparate ideas. But all of these better breadcrumbs are leading us to the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ and the new covenant.

- Now, by this, the author isn't saying that there are now two covenants. One of them better than the other, but both okay. That's how we often use the word better. If I want to get to breakfast, I can take my bike, but it might be better to take a car.
- That's not what the author means by better. As we'll see in chapter 8, the supremacy of the new implies the obsolescence of the old.
 - *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.* (Hebrews 8:13)
- The new covenant isn't new the same way that the next generation of iPhone is new. It isn't replacing something that was fairly effective and remains so, but instead has replaced what was never designed to be permanent and sufficient.
- What is better about the new covenant is precisely its sufficiency, its efficacy.
- In other words, now that the new has come, the old is bankrupt, obsolete, imperfect.
- The old could not actually bring people close. In fact, it ironically kept people at bay, but the new breaks down the wall of separation and tears down the curtains and beckons us to come. What makes the new better is that it is effective. Tetelestai, it is finished.
- There are no more sacrifices. The altar is closed.
- The Mosaic system was based upon a principle of law whereas the new covenant is based on promise. That's precisely why it is better.
- So its a better covenant and as such, it has a better guarantor, a pledge, a downpayment. That word means someone who vouches for something as you might guarantee a loan for your child. In doing so, you thus assume the consequences and penalties for the one whom you guarantee.
- We see that image in the OT in Judah, who was a typological guarantor. If you recall the story, Joseph tests his brothers in Egypt by asking to see Benjamin so Judah tells their father, Jacob:
 - *...Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.* (Genesis 43:8-9)
- And that's what Christ has done for us. He has guaranteed the conditions of the covenant and sealed it with His own blood. He has born the blame and pledged Himself as our safety.
- So the new covenant could only fail if Christ Himself could only fail, but Christ can't fail because He is Himself God and He is thus immutable.
- As we'll read in chapter 13
 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8)
- That's why we can say with Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:20
 - *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ].* (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- It isn't that the previous covenant was bad. The word better is comparative. He isn't comparing a bad covenant with a good covenant, but rather an efficacious one with one which wasn't perfect because it wasn't intended to be. It was always intended to point outside itself to another.
- There was planned obsolescence built into the nature of the Mosaic covenant in order to foreshadow the new. The impossibility of the law is intended to cultivate gratitude for the promises of God that are not based on what we do, what we offer.
- The new covenant is founded on a promise. And it comes with a guarantor and that guarantor is Christ and Christ is God and Christ has already pre-paid our debts. So anytime we accrue new debts, we don't need to offer new sacrifices as the old covenant entailed, we simply need to remember that Christ is our guarantor.

- We need to remember and believe that our sins were paid in full. Our covenant with God can never be broken because as soon as we incur sin, Christ removes it.
- And that's unlike the old covenant. As we'll see as we progress through the book, the OT sacrifices never actually atoned for sin. Like a child cleaning their room by simply throwing everything under the bed or in the closet, so the Mosaic system never actually sanctified, purified. Those sacrifices merely covered our sins, they didn't remove them.
- That was a problem in Rom 3 for the apostle Paul. How could a just God justify unjust people? How could He forgive us by means of sacrifice when those sacrifices didn't actually atone? The answer is Jesus. Those sacrifices didn't atone in and of themselves, but they sufficed as a sign, a shadow to point to the ultimate fulfillment & as Rom 8 says, in light of that new covenant reality:
 - *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1–4)*
- And how does Romans 8 conclude?
- With a promise that all things work together for good. With the rhetorical question, if God is for us, who can be against us? With promise that God will graciously give us all things we need. With the promise that nothing can separate us from His love.
 - *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39)*
- What Paul is doing is fleshing out the same reality that the author of Hebrews is implying. If Jesus is the guarantor of the new covenant and if the new covenant is a better covenant, then there is no way to actually fall away from that covenant. One of the things that makes the new covenant new is that it includes the provision of preservation and perseverance.
- But how does that function in a book warning about the dangers of apostasy?
- I want to close with an illustration that might help to understand how God's sovereignty and man's perseverance relate.
- My daughter and son both love to climb trees and hang from branches. And we've faced the very situation many a time where they're hanging from a branch and they suddenly get scared. So I'll stand somewhat close to them and say, don't be afraid, I've got you.
- And that message of reassurance is sometimes all they need to get over the fear and to hang even longer or even pull themselves back up.
- Or, another illustration involves lifting weights. When someone is lifting with a spotter, they can often lift more even if that spotter isn't touching the weights. Simply knowing that they are there lends a certain strength to the lifter.
- And that's kind of what the author of Hebrews is doing here. He is worried about the prospects of people falling away, not that they lose their salvation, but that they leave the church and prove themselves pretenders. He is concerned that they will fall away, they will drift. So the book functions to show that they are in Christ's sovereign grasp, included in Christ's better covenant. And rather than providing an excuse to give up, as we might think from a fleshly, worldly perspective, those promises have the exact opposite effect, they entice and encourage and empower us to hold fast.

- To hold fast when temptation strikes, when sin comes calling, to hold fast when doubts arise, when fears rear up, when suffering assails us.
- When all that is in us rises up against the word, God's promises remind us that Christ is better.
- In those moments, we need to be reminded that our covenant with God is not based on law, but promise and is thus a better covenant guaranteed by Christ Himself.
- Next week we'll continue to flesh out the meaning of Christ's perpetual priesthood and the contrast with the Levitical priests who were always limited by their own mortality. As my own near death experience this week reminds us, we are fragile, we are finite, we are a mist or vapor. But Christ is better as we'll see next week.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- As we think about communion, we are reminded of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:28.
 - *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1 Corinthians 11:28)*
- He warns in that context against the danger of taking the supper in an unworthy way. What does that mean? It means to presume upon it. To take it while having no intention that it do what it is intended to do. To refuse to allow it to empower you to confess and repent and walk in the light.
- Perhaps you've messed up this week. Perhaps you're floundering. This meal is for you.
- As Christ says, he's come to call sinners, the sick, not the healthy, not those superficially righteous in their own eyes.
- So I want to give you a second to confess and repent and then we will take the meal together.
 - *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)*