

## Sermon Transcript

02.22.2026

Hebrews 8:7-13

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- Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Hebrews 8.
- As you do, I want to mention that a year from now, I'll be getting ready to take another tour group to Israel...unless of course the world hasn't descended into WWII. I do these every few years or so & there's still room if you're interested.
- Now, why do I do it?
- It isn't because I believe that Israel is the Holy Land to which Christians should pilgrimage. It isn't because I think Americans or Christians have an unconditional biblical mandate to support the modern nation state of Israel.
- Rather, I go because it profoundly affects the way that you read and understand the Scriptures. The same way that seeing a picture of the Alps is different from seeing the Alps. Or being on a safari is different than reading a book about lions or even seeing them in a zoo, so its one thing to read about the mount of Olives or the Jordan River and another to actually see them. Going to Israel is a bit like injecting some steroids into your Bible reading, like going from analog to digital, black and white to color, 2d to 3d.
- But today just about any mention of Israel is controversial. Any criticism is perceived as anti-semitic and any support as Zionistic especially in some circles of the evangelical web.
- And, as in many such online discussions, there's very little nuance, very little clarity, and a whole lot of talking past each other.
- On one hand, some Christians & some American politicians seem to think that any critique of Israel is anti-semitic, as if saying that Jews need Jesus is offensive or questioning the theological significance of modern Israel is somehow bigoted or noticing the disproportionate influence of Israel on American foreign policy is somehow hateful. In fact, one definition of anti-semitism codified in US policy claims that any suggestion that Jews played any sort of role in the death of Christ is hate speech. So that's one extreme.
- On the other hand, there are those who seem to think that any support of Israel in any context for any reason is only due to Jewish propaganda and Zionism. There are supposedly Christian voices who overreact to the concept creep of anti-semitism by going too far in the other direction, denying the holocaust, thinking that a cabal of Jews is behind every evil, and even praising the Nazis or Hamas.
- As Christians, we have to think critically. There is a reason the public school system doesn't teach critical thinking. Because thinking is power. What's the enemy's main weapon? Deception. And how we are transformed according to Scripture? By the renewing of our minds. Intellectual laziness plays right into enemy's hands on either end of the ideological spectrum.
- One side thinks Israel can do no wrong, the other that it can do no right.

- This will be important as we read our text today which talks about the Mosaic Covenant being rendered obsolete. What exactly that means, we'll see.
- First, let's pray.
- Self, others, me.
- Last week we took a break from Hebrews so let's jump back into the book by considering the context.
- By now, you know that Hebrews is about the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Christ is better is a way to sum up the book.
- And the way that functions pastorally is to exhort these first century Jewish Christians to hold fast and stand firm, to not drift.
- Why might they be tempted to drift or fall away? Because they're facing persecution. They're being imprisoned and beaten, their goods are being confiscated. There is increasing pressure for them to recant and relent and return to the seeming safety of the synagogue.
- So the author writes this to show how utterly insane that would be. After all, Christ is better.
- He is better than the angels who mediated the law, better than Moses who gave the law, better than Joshua and the promised land and Sabbath rest. But in chapters 7-10, the main point is that Christ is a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice to establish a better covenant on the basis of better promises. So why go back to what is futile and foolish and inferior and obsolete?
- So how is He a better priest? We've seen a number of ways.
- 1. He's eternal. Levitical priests were temporal. They didn't stay in office because they kept dying
- 2. His priesthood is based on promise and not law. God's law can change, His promises cannot because God Himself cannot change.
- 3. His character is better. He's holy, innocent, & unstained whereas Levitical priests were not.
- 4. His work is permanent. The Aaronic priests would have to offer daily sacrifices because their work was insufficient, ineffective. Christ's work is better because its efficacious, sufficient, permanent.
- 5. Related to this His work actually accomplished what it was intended to do. The Levitical priesthood instead communicated the inaccessibility and transcendence of God. As we've said, the entire idea of the temple symbolized a separation between Jew & Gentile, man & woman, and God & man. But Christ has united what sin fractures.
- 6. Christ's priesthood saves to the uttermost. Its holistic. The Levitical priesthood offered a type of salvation, but it was temporary & partial. The salvation that it offered was a shadow, a picture, a type.
- And as a sign of that superiority we saw last week that Christ sat down. And that's a really big deal because it symbolized that His work was over. In fact, it's such a big deal, that the author will devote a paragraph in chapter 10 to emphasize the significance of Christ's posture.
- And then last time we ended with these words:

- *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. (Hebrews 8:6)*
- Speaking of a better covenant, the author will expound on that in our text today. How is the new better than the old? We'll see that this morning.
- So let's begin in vs. 7.

***For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (Hebrews 8:7)***

- As we begin, I want you to think back to the opening chapters of Genesis. In the beginning God creates and all that He creates is good. In fact, it says that it was very good.
- And yet, even before sin entered into the world, something was said to be not good. What was that?
- It was not good that man was alone. Man was given a task, a role, a responsibility, a mandate. Fill the earth & subdue it. Now, contrary to your Aunt Lilith who's a professor of feminism & gender theory, that is not a task that a man can fulfill independent of woman. In order to fill the earth, man needs woman & woman needs man.
- There is an embedded interdependence in the original creation and that mutual need is ordered for our good, for our ability to fulfill God's mandate.
- So, the world was good, without sin, and yet it was incomplete. Even in the cultural mandate, we see that God's work of ordering the chaos was incomplete as God told man to subdue the earth...make the rest of the world look like the garden. Why would mankind be told to subdue the earth if it was already completely ordered? So, something can be perfect in the sense of without sin and yet imperfect in the sense of incompleteness.
- I mention that as an analogy of how something can be good and yet insufficient to accomplish God's plans because that's how the law and Mosaic covenant functioned.
- The law was good. The covenant was good. And yet, they were never intended to be permanent. They were always intended to point beyond themselves to something else.
- We've seen language like this before.
- *Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11)*
- And again, in 18 and 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)*
- This matches Paul's argument in Romans 7 where he talks about the inability of the law to save and asks whether that means that the law is therefore bad and responds that the problem isn't the law, but sin which takes advantage of the inability of the law, a fatal flaw in the law. But the law itself, according to Paul as we read in Romans 7:12:
- *So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)*

- As an illustration we've used before, think of firearms and the difference between a handgun, rifle and shotgun and how those are good for different purposes. A shotgun is great for killing birds, but not for killing a buck from 100 yards.
- Or consider how a chainsaw is great for cutting down a tree, but not for cutting a piece of paper.
- Or a whisk is good for stirring, but not for ladling soup.
- Take that idea and apply it to the Mosaic Law and covenant. The Mosaic administration was great for revealing sin, but not for curing it. It was great for revealing God's will, but not empowering us to obey it.
- The Mosaic covenant functioned well as an MRI to reveal the cancer of sin, but not as a plan or prescription to treat it.
- In that sense, it is not "faultless." There is a defect embedded in the law. The main defect is that it can't actually heal, can't actually save. As we'll see later in Hebrews, not only were the priests too sinful to offer sacrifices, but the blood of bulls and goats were never a permanent solution. They functioned well as signs and shadows, but not substance.
- So it isn't that this new covenant is plan B. It wasn't like God thought the law would work and then lo and behold he was taken off guard and had pivot His eternal purposes after a few centuries of trying the Mosaic way. Rather, He had embedded imperfection in the Mosaic system in order to point toward His ultimate purpose in the glorification of His Son. It was never intended to be perfect or complete. Its imperfection was the point.
- That's important to understand so I want to make sure you understand what's going on.
- The author of Hebrews is saying that the Mosaic covenant was imperfect & was never intended to be perfect. But as with the case of Adam in the garden in Genesis 1 and 2, imperfect doesn't mean sinful. The author isn't saying that the Mosaic covenant was sinful or that it was bad, just that it was designed with a fatal flaw, a planned obsolescence as we've talked about before.
- So what is the defect, the fault, the weakness in the Mosaic covenant?
- Well, before we can answer that, we need to understand what a covenant is.
- Whatever your theological background, you should realize that covenants are central to God's redemptive purposes. Throughout Scripture, God makes a number of explicit covenants with His people. For instance, He makes a covenant with Noah and His descendants, with Abraham, Israel at Sinai, with David, etc. In addition, scholars often recognize other implicit covenants such as in the creation story itself.
- So what is a covenant? Well, a covenant is like a contract within the context of relationship. It is like a contract in that there are binding commitments that are made between two parties, but unlike a contract in the sense that there is a relational element to it. I have no real relationship with Apple or AT&T or Chase bank or whatever other contracts I've signed, but a covenant is a contract within the context of relationship.
- And God's covenants unroll progressively in scripture, each one building on the others. In fact, the various covenants plural all progressively reveal the singular redemptive plan of God.
- So the covenants deal with redemption. In the Noahic covenant, God promises to never again cut off the inhabitants of the world by means of flood. In Abraham, God promises to bring a redeemer through His seed to bless the whole world. And by the time we come to Moses, one might presume that this is the final fulfillment.

- God reveals a law and covenant with Israel at Sinai that was based on grace. God had rescued Israel from Egypt and was delivering them to Canaan and so the basis was grace, but the requirement was law. Do this and live, the covenant said. Now, that was true. Had Israel fulfilled the law, she would have lived.
- But the problem was that the Mosaic covenant didn't provide for a means to overcome the sin that rendered the covenant imperfect. What good is a covenant that says do this and live if man is unable to keep it and thus stands condemned?
- As we've said before, run John run, the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands.
- Now, if that covenant would have been sufficient, there would have been no need for another. But it wasn't and thus there is.
- So, it isn't that the old was pretty good, but the new is simply better, like a new iPhone is pretty much the same as the previous but with a few new and improved features. The old wasn't good enough. Rather, it has a fatal flaw as contrasted with the new covenant.
- We'll read about that in vss. 8-9.

***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, 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. (Hebrews 8:8-9)***

- Again, notice that this isn't man finding fault with the covenant. From man's perspective, we have nothing to complain about with the Mosaic covenant. Israel's inability to fulfill it is entirely owing to her own sin. The Mosaic covenant wasn't bad, we are. We can't fault the law, but God does.
- God finds fault in His own work. Again, not because it was bad, but because it was unfinished. It was preparatory. It was a prelude or preview to the final thing.
- And so, even under the era of the Mosaic covenant, in the days of the prophets, God had prophesied a new covenant. Hebrews is here quoting Jeremiah 31 in what is the lengthiest OT quote in the entire NT.
- We see a similar idea in Ezekiel 36 and other places in the OT in which God promises a new covenant.
- Why? Because Israel didn't continue in the covenant. Why didn't they continue in the covenant? Because they were prevented by their own sin from doing so. Sin has so totally and radically and pervasively effected mankind, that we're entirely unable to obey apart from grace.
- This was the big debate in the 5<sup>th</sup> century between Augustine and Pelagius. Pelagius believed that God's grace consisted in His giving His law and that we can naturally obey that law because sin is not something we inherit by nature, but rather imitate by nurture.
- Augustine on the other hand said that grace was necessary in order for us to obey because sin has corrupted our very nature. As he writes in his autobiographical Confessions, God must grant what He commands.

- So this is why a new covenant was necessary. The Mosaic covenant exhorted, but didn't empower. It gave commands, but not the capacity to obey those commands. In our natural state of being under sin, the law does nothing but condemn and threaten us.
- The fault with the Mosaic covenant was that it commanded obedience, but didn't truly deal with the sin that prohibited our obedience. It gave the command and the penalty for disobeying the command, but not the power to obey it.
- And it wasn't supposed to. That's the part to keep in mind lest we think that God did something imperfectly. God's work is always perfect, but it is progressive. The same way that He made man, but made man see the incompatibility of the animals and his inherent inability to fulfill the mandate on his own before God created woman, so God makes a Mosaic covenant in order to show man's inability to fulfill the mandate apart from grace.
- As we read earlier in 7:18
- *For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness...* (Hebrews 7:18)
- The priests of the covenant were sinful and kept dying. Their sacrifices were categorically insufficient since the blood of bulls and goats can't truly atone for human sin. They offered their gifts in a type or shadow. Everything about the Mosaic covenant communicated its temporary and imperfect nature.
- Now this original prophecy in Jeremiah's time was delivered to a people that had been delivered into exile. The northern kingdom has already been exiled by Assyria and Judah is in the process of being exiled to Babylon as Jeremiah prophesies. And this shouldn't have been surprising for exile was a fulfillment of the original curses of the Mosaic covenant.
- As it says in Dt 28
- *But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.* (Deuteronomy 28:15)
- Among the most significant of these curses was the promise of exile, that Israel would be removed from the land and foreigners would rule over her. So Israel in the days of Jeremiah was experiencing the consequences of disobedience to the covenant and the prophecy is showing that such was the inevitable fruit of the covenant. The covenant was always going to produce exile because it dealt with sin by means of shadow, but not substance. It was a type or picture, but not the real thing. For that something else was necessary.
- BTW, this is one of the reasons that we should be careful today about talking about modern Israel's theological right to the land of Canaan. According to the OT itself, Israel's right to that land was contingent upon its obedience to the covenant. Given the fact that modern Israel today is generally unfaithful to the Mosaic covenant and, as we'll read about shortly, the Mosaic covenant is no longer the binding standard, and it is difficult to determine exactly to what degree modern Israel relates to ancient Israel, it would be difficult to argue for a biblical, theological right to that land today.
- That doesn't mean that Israel doesn't have a geo-political right to the land or that they should be displaced, but it does mean that we should be careful about how we apply biblical categories in light of modern distinctions.

- As we often talk about, beware of the pendulum swing. The fact that modern Jews don't have a theological right to the land doesn't mean that they don't have any right to the land. That's swinging the pendulum. That's sloppy thinking.
- But the point is that the old covenant was imperfect, incomplete.
- So a new covenant was essential. And not just new, but different. Notice the words, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers. In some way the new covenant must deal with the flaws of the old.
- How it is new? How is it different? We'll see a few ways if we keep reading. Let's look at vss. 10-12.

***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. 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. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."* (Hebrews 8:10-12)**

- Immediately after proclaiming the curses we read about in Dt. 28, Moses summons Israel and says this in chapter 29
- *...You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. (Deuteronomy 29:2-4)*
- Notice the words, to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. Again, exile was always inevitable. Because the Mosaic covenant didn't deal with the root issue of depravity, spiritual blindness and deafness and an unwilling heart.
- But even in Dt. there is a hint of future hope. In chapter 30:6, it says:
- *And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deuteronomy 30:6)*
- This is what is necessary. The Mosaic covenant circumcised the foreskin, but not the heart. But the problem wasn't external, the problem was internal. Jesus speaks of this in the gospels where he says, the problem isn't dirty hands or dirty food or a dirty dish, but dirty hearts.
- The problem wasn't mere behavior, but went much deeper into the inner recesses of humanity. We sin because we are sinners by nature. And if the problem is the heart, then the solution must involve the heart. If the problem is internal, then outward obedience isn't enough.
- So something must be done about our hearts and nature in order to enable our obedience. This is where the new covenant comes in.
- As the author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah
- This is the covenant that I will make.
- And then he mentions a number of new aspects of the new covenant, a number of ways that the new covenant is unlike the one made at Sinai.

- First, the law is written onto hearts and minds. As Paul writes in his epistles, there is a difference between the law written on tablets of stone and the law written on hearts.
- For instance,
- *And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)*
- So, in the new covenant, God Himself writes his law on the hearts of His people. The law isn't merely an external coercion, but an internal compulsion. The love of Christ compels us not merely from without, but from within.
- As we read in a similar prophesy in Ezekiel 36
- *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)*
- This is what the new testament describes as regeneration, the giving of a new nature. The old nature, because of the pervasive effects of sin, is unable to obey, unable to believe, so God removes the heart of stone and gives a soft heart. He puts His spirit within us and causes us to walk in his statutes and obey His rules.
- For more on that, you might want to check out last month's theological equipping class on obedience and its relationship to the new covenant.
- But that's one difference between the Mosaic and the new covenants.
- Second, there is a universality to the new covenant. Notice he says, all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
- This, again, is unlike the Mosaic covenant in which not all Israel was Israel. Every Israelite was considered a member of the covenant community regardless of actual faith whereas in the new covenant, to be a member of the covenant is to have the law written on the heart and to walk in faith.
- This, by the way, is one of the reasons that I reject paedobaptism since within Presbyterian and other traditions that baptize infants, they maintain a distinction in which unregenerate persons are considered members of the church. We've got a blog on that if you want to read more, but the point is that in the new covenant, that distinction between ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel, that category of a remnant within the people of God has been broken down. Under the new covenant, to be a member of the covenant is to be part of the remnant, the elect.
- So that's a second way that the covenant is new and unlike the old.
- And a third related way is that the new covenant actually deals with sins. It promises salvation. It says, I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. Now, the Mosaic covenant also promised mercy and forgiveness so what's the difference? How is this promise unlike the Mosaic promise?
- Well, because in the new covenant, that forgiveness is actually accomplished whereas under the Mosaic covenant it was just foreshadowed. As we've seen throughout the book, it was a type, a shadow, a picture of the ultimate reality who is Christ.
- So the new is distinguished from the old by its capacity to actually and fully and completely deal with the sin problem that plagued the Mosaic covenant. Under Moses, sin is covered, but not actually taken away.

- As we'll read in Hebrews 9
- *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.* (Hebrews 9:22)
- So blood is necessary for forgiveness. Death is necessary. And so the Mosaic law commanded sacrifices of bulls and goats and doves and so forth in order to procure blood. But the problem, as we'll read in chapter 10 is that
- *...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:4)
- Those sacrifices were perfect for functioning as a sign, a symbol, a shadow, but imperfect for accomplishing forgiveness. For that we need the thing to which the sign points.
- So that's how the new covenant is different and new. And not just new, but inherently better.
- As we read in chapter 7:
  - *This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.* (Hebrews 7:22)
  - *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.* (Hebrews 8:6)
- Now, you might notice that this prophesy is directed to the house of Israel. That works well in the context of Hebrews since these original readers are most likely ethnic Jews who have converted to Christ, but how does this new covenant apply to Gentiles as almost all of us are?
- Well, for that, we need to move out of Hebrews a bit and look to Paul's theology where he talks about Gentiles being grafted into the Israel vine through faith in Christ. We become children of Abraham by sharing in faith in the promises of God.
- And this fits with the original context of Jeremiah where not only does the new covenant unify the people of God as we read earlier, all shall know Him from the least to the greatest, not only is there a unifying trajectory, but a universalizing move as well, as Gentiles are grafted into the eschatological people of God in fulfillment of the original mandate to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed which is why the promises of the new covenant are consistently applied within the context of the church.
- In light of the new covenant, membership in the covenant community is not based on genetic descent from Abraham, but rather union with Christ.
- When it comes to the difference between Israel and the church, there is both continuity and discontinuity. Historic covenantal theology like in Presbyterian circles tends to overly emphasize the continuity whereas classical dispensational theology tends to overly emphasize the discontinuity. Thankfully progressive covenantalism and progressive dispensationalism today tend to avoid those excesses.
- So with all of that in mind, let's summarize how the author says that the new is better than the old. We mentioned at least three ways:
  - First, the law is written on the heart, so people can actually believe and obey.
  - Second, all who are in the covenant have this gift of regeneration so there is no distinction in the church between saved & unsaved as there was in Israel. Now, obviously, that doesn't mean that there aren't any unsaved members of any local church. What I mean is that by definition, the term church refers to those

persons who have been regenerated & believed in Christ so if there is an unregenerate member of a local church, that person isn't really a member of the body of Christ. They are a hypocrite, a pretender.

- Third, the new covenant actually and truly deals with sin. Finally, ultimately, decisively.
- This is the genius and goodness of the new covenant.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 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. (Hebrews 8:13)***

- There is in some circles a mistaken notion that there are now two active covenants, two different ways to access God.
- Gentiles enter through the new covenant while Jews are still invited through the Mosaic covenant. Therefore, there is no reason to evangelize Jews since they don't need Jesus, they just need Moses.
- In other words, Jews are not required to convert to Christianity or to accept Christ as Savior because God's covenant with the Jewish people remains in force as an equally valid means of salvation for them.
- As John Stott writes:
- "There is no hint of a special way of salvation for the Jews which dispenses with faith in Christ. It is understandable that since the holocaust Jews have demanded an end to Christian missionary activity among them, and that many Christians have felt embarrassed about continuing it. It is even mooted that Jewish evangelism is an unacceptable form of anti-Semitism. So some Christians have attempted to develop a theological basis for leaving Jews alone in their Judaism. Reminding us that God's covenant with Abraham was an 'everlasting covenant', they maintain that it is still in force, and that therefore God saves Jewish people through their own covenant, without any necessity for them to believe in Jesus. This proposal is usually called a 'two-covenant theology.'" (John Stott)
- Now, ironically, this was first theorized by a Jewish philosopher as an overreaction to the holocaust in an attempt to eradicate what he considered anti-semitic. What makes it ironic is that it actually advocates a position that the apostle Paul considers the heart of anti-semitism, though obviously that term didn't exist in his day. What do I mean?
- Well, a failure to evangelize Jews is rooted in a hatred of them. If you really love Jews, then you will tell them that they stand accused and condemned and are in need of a new covenant just as is true for Gentiles, whether Muslim, Hindu, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, atheist, wiccan or whatever. All the world needs Jesus.
- Jews aren't exempt from that. As Christ says, I am the way and the truth. Not a way and a truth. Not one of two.
- Hebrews speaks to that here in vs. 13 when it says that the new covenant has rendered the old obsolete. This reminds me of a scene in the original Iron Man that my family watched the other night.
- Perhaps you may recall when Tony Stark gets back from months of captivity and he needs to replace the arc reactor in his chest so he makes a new and improved version

and asks Pepper to throw away the old one. Well, she doesn't and that comes in handy later in the movie when he is forced to temporarily use the old one to keep him alive.

- That's not how the Mosaic covenant functions. It isn't a backup plan. It isn't just placed in a junk drawer in case you ever need it again, it has been rendered obsolete.
- And that's a really good thing because, as we've seen, the Mosaic covenant was imperfect. Even if the Mosaic covenant was still a means to God, then the only result would be condemnation because though it reveals God's will, it doesn't empower man to keep it.
- And so we see hints of this same idea of the obsolescence of the Mosaic covenant elsewhere in the NT. For instance, look at 2 Corinthians 3 and notice all of the hints of the non-enduring status of the previous administration.
- *Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. (2 Corinthians 3:7-11)*
- So what does it mean that it has been rendered obsolete?
- Well, we see the underlying Greek word used elsewhere in Hebrews.
  - *they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment (Hebrews 1:11)*
- The word translated wear out is the same root as is translated obsolete in chapter 8.
- That same word is used one other time in the NT.
- *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. (Luke 12:33)*
- Imagine a moneybag that has worn out, grown old, a money bag full of holes. How helpful is that moneybag? Not at all. When that bag is worn out, you would be forced to discard it because it would be unreliable.
- Or imagine some socks with holes in them. How effective are they in fulfilling their sockly purpose?
- And that's the idea that the author is applying to the Mosaic covenant.
- By saying that its obsolete, he means it is no longer functional, no longer of any use. We already read something similar about the Levitical priesthood in chapter 7
- *For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness... (Hebrews 7:18)*
- So now we see that it wasn't just one or two laws that have been set aside, but the entire covenant. That doesn't mean that the old testament is irrelevant to Christians, but it does mean that we filter it all through the new covenant and Christ. It is no longer our constitutional arrangement with God. We are under a new constitution, the law of Christ.
- It isn't so much that the old covenant has been replaced as it has been fulfilled. Christ perfectly fulfilled all of the law and covenant so that we would be under a different law and covenant.

- This reminds me of an experience I had in my first couple of years of marriage. When I first got married, the average age of my clothes was like a decade. As a 34 year old single pastor, I didn't have much need for an elaborate wardrobe. Most of my clothes I wore not because I really liked them, but because they were all I had and I didn't have money to buy anything else. So, there was one particular sweater that I wore for that very reason. And though it was probably never in style, it had definitely seen a better day.
- So one day I'm out running errands with Kaci and her mom and I'm wearing that sweater and they spot a newer nicer sweater & her mom offers to buy it for me on 1 condition. I have to take off the old one and throw it away right then and there and wear the new one out of the store.
- That's what Hebrews is saying about the Mosaic covenant. Remember the context, they want the benefits that only the new covenant provides, but they want to go back to Judaism to avoid persecution & the author says, you can't have both. You have to choose. You can have Judaism or Jesus, the Mosaic covenant or the new covenant, the shadow or substance. You can't have both.
- If you want to yoke yourself back to the law, the inevitable result is condemnation, but there is something entirely different in store for those in Christ.
- As Romans 8 begins:
- *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* (Romans 8:1)
- That's good news. There is now no condemnation. None whatever. But why is there no condemnation. Vs. 2
- *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* (Romans 8:2)
- Because one law has set us free from another. God hasn't simply forgiven He has fulfilled.
- And if we keep reading:
- *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 8:3-4)
- Notice that God has done what the law could not. Because of its weakness and uselessness because of our sin. God has done what we could not and the Mosaic law could not. How? By sending His own Son to fulfill the law not only for us, but also in us, thus freeing us to walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
- So this why its so foolish and futile to try to yoke yourself back to the law, whether that is to the Mosaic law or some legalism or moralism of our own making. This is why it does not good to clean the outside of the cup, to try to earn God's love and approval by our own effort.
- Because apart from the grace of the new covenant, sin renders us incapacitated. Even if the law could save it wouldn't because we can't keep the law apart from grace.
- Christ and Christ alone saves. All else is shadow and smoke. He alone satisfies.
- Let's pray.

## **Communion**

- Fence table
- In honor of our text today, as we prepare for communion, I want to just encourage you to take a second and think about this meal as an objective evidence of God's grace.
- This meal means that you are forgiven. It means that it is finished.
- As Christ says, this meal represents the new covenant in His blood. Each time we partake, we remember what is ours in the new covenant. We remember forgiveness and fulfillment and the gift of the Spirit and the community of the saints and so forth.
- So take a second and pray and think about the meaning of the meal and all that Christ has done for and in you.
- On the night...
- take together.