

OUR TEXT – Hebrews 8:7-13

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says,

"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

WILLS, TRUSTS AND TESTAMENTS

Shortly after Joanne and I were married, we were convinced by family and friends to establish a "last will and testament." This was so that in case of untimely death of either of both of us, our assets, small as they were at the time, would be properly passed on to our loved ones according to our wishes. And so, with the help of a lawyer friend, we drew up a will. And then we felt more confident about what would happen after our deaths.

Now some years later we were told that a will alone was not the best answer, for the government would take too many dollars away in taxes when we died under the stipulations of merely a will. We were told we needed something new called a "trust" which would, upon death, disperse far more of our assets to our family and far less to the government in taxes. Therefore, there came about one more lawyer and a one more document which superseded our previous will and give brought greater assurance and confidence in what would happen after our deaths. The new trust is better than the old will, which has been superseded by the old.

I think most of you know where I am going with this, for there is a parallel between our will and trust and what we call the Old and New Testaments.

1. Our will, trust and both Testaments were one-sided agreements. Our will and trust were both legal agreements. But neither was made as a mutual agreement between two parties. Under both, our assets would basically go to our children and their children. But our children and grandchildren did not enter in to this agreement. The agreement was one-sided with my wife and I deciding where our assets would go. Our children were the just the recipients and could only decide whether to accepts the distribution of our wishes or not.
Likewise, the Old and New Testaments were not mutual agreements made between two parties of God and mankind. Rather, in both cases God made the offer and man could accept or reject it. God gets to make the rules of how a relationship with Him is possible.
2. Both were replaced with something better. Just as the will was replaced with the better trust, so also has the Old Testament, or Covenant been replaced by the New. For the New offers better assurance and better promises.
3. Neither were flawed in and of themselves. It is not that the will was flawed – it was a perfect document, just as the Old Testament was a perfect, God-inspired document. Note

Paul's assessment of the Old Testament Law:

Romans 7:12 *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

And, hear Jesus' assessment of the Law:

Matthew 5:17-18 *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

4. Neither could accomplish the designers ultimate intentions. My will and the Old Testament could not accomplish what the designer of the document intended, because of imperfections outside of its scope. In the case of my will, laws changed that made the will less effective. In the case of the Old Testament, we who are flawed with sin could never be made perfect, which was God's intention from the beginning. He gave us the Old Testament Law as a perfect standard that we could never meet, to show us how much we needed a Savior – Jesus!

Romans 3:20 *By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

Galatians 3:24 *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.*

LEARNING FROM THE TEXT

Verse 7 Here we find the first, or “old,” covenant described as not being “faultless” or “perfect.” And the beginning of verse 8 goes on to say that God found “fault” with this old covenant, so a new one had to be effected. BE CAREFUL HERE. It first appears that this is teaching that the Old Testament was flawed and imperfect, and therefore had to be replaced. But this is NOT the meaning, for at least two important reasons:

1. God is perfect and does not make anything that is not perfect. As we saw in Romans 7:12, the Law is/was holy, righteous and good.
2. The “fault” is not in the Law, but in the recipients of the Law. The Law was “flawed” in that it could not make sinful people perfect.

Hebrews 7:18-19a There is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness for the Law made nothing perfect.

The Law perfectly accomplished its designated purpose in pointing us as sinners to the impossibility of keeping the Law perfectly, and therefore needing a Savior to help be righteous in God's eyes.

Verse 8-9 Verse 8 through 12 references the Old Testament promise given in Jeremiah 31: 31-34.

It is astonishing to note that the promise of a new covenant from God is given some 500 years before Jesus is born. NOTE THAT JEREMIAH 31 IS THE OLD TESTAMENT CHAPTER OF THE NEW COVENANT. Hebrews 8 simply uses it in the author's explanation of what this new covenant is through the Messiah Jesus.

NEW INDEED The promise is clearly something new. This doesn't mean that God is not always the same – He is. Nor does it mean that God changed his mind – He didn't. It does mean that God knew that in the course of time on the earth a Savior would be born on the earth offering salvation by grace and not of works. Jesus would reflect perfectly the heart of God all along, for He was indeed God in the flesh. This would be a covenant of GRACE

It was not “new” in just the sense of new in time (Gk: “neos”) but “new” in the sense of new in quality (Gk: “kainos”) = “brand new”

1. **Reconciliation** – for it would be for both the Jewish houses of Israel (northern kingdom)

and Judah (southern kingdom), bringing them together for the first time since their separation shortly after Solomon's reign.

2. **Caring** – not based on “if you obey, then I will bless” but on the continual care and provision of a gracious and loving God offering relationship through His Son, Jesus.

Grace has always been in God's equation – meaning He is a God of grace yesterday, today and forever. Grace didn't just come with Jesus, but has been the essence of God's person from the beginning.

THE NEW COVENANT IN A WORD FROM VERSE 8-9: **GRACE**

Verse 10 Here we see that this new covenant is INTERNAL – written on people's minds and hearts, not on tablets of stone. That this new law will be put in the mind of believers speaks of a Christian's propensity to KNOW the right thing to do. That it is written on our hearts speaks of a Christian's propensity to have the WILL to do the right thing. And both propensities are because of the Holy Spirit living internally in each believer. The Old Covenant was the following of rules written on stone. The New Covenant is following the leading of the internal Spirit of God, confirmed by the written Word of God – our Bible.

The last phrase of the verse: “I will be their God and they shall be my people” speaks of the newness of this covenant in intimate RELATIONSHIP – again, because of the Spirit in us.

THE NEW COVENANT IN A WORD FROM VERSE 10: **INTERNAL**

Verse 11-12 in verse 11 we find that under the new covenant all true believers know God – we don't have to teach other believers to know Him – they just do, because God lives in them. We teach how to have a deeper understanding of what they already know – but the knowledge and assurance of God is universal with all believers.

In verse 12 we find the marvelous FORGIVENESS of the new covenant. Our sins are washed clean by the blood of Christ and we are seen as righteous in God's eyes. Here God says “I will remember their sins no more.” Some wrongly teach that this means God has no remembrance of our sins. Of course God remembers – God is God and knows all. But even we understand that we cannot forget sins either of our own or of those committed against us. What God is saying is that he dismisses our sin as being worthy of remembrance and TREATS US AS IF WE HAD NOT SINNED. And this is exactly what God asks of us in response to others sinning against us. To truly forgive is to treat the offender AS IF THEY HAD NOT SINNED. That means never bringing up the sin again as “ammunition.” It might, and probably will, still hurt and bring up sad memories, and there well may be consequences of the sin committed. But nonetheless, true forgiveness – both on God's part and our part – is treating the offender AS IF SIN HAD NOT OCCURRED. And for us, that is only possible with God giving us that strength – and He will.

THE NEW COVENANT IN A WORD FROM VERSE 11-12: **FORGIVENESS**

Verse 13 Here we learn that the first, or “Old” Covenant has been made obsolete. Remember in Matthew 5 Jesus said that He came to “fulfill” the Law – making its ceremonial regulations obsolete. At the time of the writing of Hebrews, the Old Testament regulations were being followed faithfully in the Jerusalem temple. But within a few years the city and its temple would be destroyed in A.D. 70. And it has never been restored to this day. It was literally “ready to disappear.” The inference is that the New Covenant is TIMELESS, also taught in the previous chapter about the “forever” nature of the new priest, covenant and promises.

THE NEW COVENANT IN A WORD FROM VERSE 13: **TIMELESS**

Putting these four words together that describe the New Covenant, we find an easy way to remember them:

G - GRACE

I - INTERNAL

F - FORGIVENESS

T – TIMELESS

The New Covenant is God's great GIFT to mankind.

God makes His offer and each can accept or reject his offer.

It is the offer of RELATIONSHIP with God through the BLOOD of JESUS, His Son.

I accept His offer as a free gift of GRACE – having done nothing to merit the gift

I find I have the INTERNAL dwelling of the Holy Spirit within me, making me righteous

I find that God given me full FORGIVENESS, and calls me to fully forgive all others

I realize that His offer is TIMELESS and will never grow obsolete or be replaced

What a GIFT

What a BETTER COVENANT !