

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 October 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

God's Better Promises

Hebrews 8:7-13

At Jesus was preaching on a mountain in Galilee, He finished His most famous sermon of all times with these words: ***“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock”*** (Matthew 7:24-25). What “sayings” was Jesus talking about? Was Jesus talking about moral codes, such as “Love thy neighbour,” or “Don’t lie,” or “Don’t steal”? Or was He talking about something far more powerful?

Well, let’s just consider some of Jesus’ “sayings.” First, consider this saying. Jesus said, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*** That’s not a moral code, isn’t it? Jesus is claiming to be the only Mediator between man and God! How about this saying, from **John 6**? Jesus said, ***“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”*** Again, this is no “moral code” that one must follow in order to *earn* heaven. Jesus was claiming that salvation is through *Him alone*, and that you must *believe on Him* in order to be saved.

Let’s consider one more saying. At the Last Supper, Jesus took the cup of grape juice, and said, ***“Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”***

What was Jesus claiming here? First, Jesus was claiming that He was about to make an entirely *New Covenant* with Israel. That is an earth-shattering claim! Secondly, Jesus was claiming that this “New Covenant” would bring *forgiveness of sins*. This is another stupendous claim. Thirdly, Jesus was claiming that He was going to ratify this New Covenant by shedding His own blood! In short, Jesus was saying that if you want to go to Heaven when you die, you must trust in Him, and in His shed blood.

Perhaps you are unsure of where you would go if you were to die today. If so, it is my prayer that you will not leave here today without knowing *exactly* how to be saved, *and* without making the decision to step over the threshold of salvation! As for those who *are* saved, it is my prayer that you will understand, even more deeply, the *New Covenant* that Christ has established—and that it will transform the way you live. The title of this message is ***God's Better Promises***.

Read Hebrews 8:6.

I. A superior Mediator (v. 6)

As we’ve studied through **Hebrews**, we’ve seen, again and again, that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, there were *many* high priests that lived and died; but not one of them had the power to forgive anyone’s sins. In contrast, the New Covenant has only *one* High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ: and not only *can* He take away sins,

but He is the *only One* who can take away sins. The high priests of the Old Testament were merely types, pointing to the *true* High Priest who would one day come to earth.

That is why Paul says, here in **verse 6**, that Christ has “*obtained a more excellent ministry.*” That word “*excellent*” is based on the Greek verb *diaphero*, which literally means “to carry across.” Christ’s ministry truly “carries you across” the treacherous, deadly canyon of sin, and gets you safely home to God. Christ’s high-priestly ministry bridges the gulf between you and God. Our sin separates us from God, and makes it impossible for us to get to Him; but Jesus carries sinners across that unpassable gulf to the shore of Heaven.

In the winter of 1858, a Frenchman named Jean Francois Gravelet (who was better known as “Monsieur Blondin”), travelled to America, with the goal of becoming the first tight-rope walker to cross Niagara Falls. On June 30, 1859, he did exactly that. A tightrope 1,300 feet long, and two inches wide, was strung across the Falls from the American side to the Canadian side. The cable hung about 1,100 feet above the water. One misstep would have meant sure death. Twenty-five thousand people gathered to watch. Bets were being made left and right; and the “smart money” said that Blondin was going to fall to his death, and be crushed. Yet, he not only crossed the Falls and back in 23 minutes, but halfway across to the Canadian side, he sat down on the cable, dropped a rope down to the “Maid of the Mist” (which was anchored 1,100 feet below), hoisted up a champaign bottle, and drank it. On his way back to the American side, he carried a Daguerreotype camera on his back, and snapped a photo of the crowd. Yet, amazing though this performance was, it was only the beginning. Until his death in 1896, he crossed Niagara Falls more than 300 times! He sometimes ran across, or strutted like a rooster. He somersaulted and backflipped. He sometimes lay down on the cable, or stopped to dangle from the cable. He carried locomotive lamps across. He pushed wheelbarrows across. He carried a table and chair across, sat down on the chair, and ate cake. He went across with a bag over his body, so that he couldn’t see. He went across strapped in shackles. He brought a small stove and kitchen utensils with him, lit a fire, cooked omelets, and then lowered it all down to the Maid of the Mist, so that the passengers could eat breakfast. He did all these things without any safety nets, and with no life insurance!

Most astounding of all, he carried *people* across. Yes, there were a precious few souls who trusted Monsieur Blondin enough to let them carry them across! How could they possibly trust him that much? Well, I believe that Blondin’s advice to his manager, Harry Colcord, says volumes. Before carrying Colcord across, Blondin told him, “Look up, Harry.... you are no longer Colcord, *you are Blondin*. Until I clear this place, be a part of *me*, mind, body, and soul. If I sway, sway with me. Do not attempt to do any balancing yourself.”

Do you see where I’m going with this, folks? There is only one Man who can get across the gulf of sin. He walked the “tightrope” perfectly. He lived a sinless life. In fact, He could have lived the sinless life 300 times over! We, on the other hand, cannot possibly get across the gulf, because we are sinners. On our own, we would all perish. Just as one misstep would mean certain death on the tightrope, so it takes only one sin for us to perish in hell for all eternity. The Bible makes it clear that “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” There is only one way across the deadly divide: you must let *Jesus* carry you across. You must *not* attempt to “balance yourself” with your own goodness, righteousness, or

religiosity. You cannot “contribute” to your salvation even a little bit. You must be placed “in Christ.” The Father cannot accept you in your sin; but He can accept Christ in His righteousness. If you have placed your trust in Christ, and have been placed “in Him,” and are identified with *Him*, God will judicially accept you as having the righteousness of His Son; and Christ will carry you safely across to the Heavenly shore.

Jesus is the High Priest of the New Covenant; and as our High Priest, He has a more “*excellent ministry*” than the high priests of the Old Testament ever had. The high priests of the Old Covenant couldn’t even begin to do what Christ does. Jesus Christ can actually “bear us across” the unbridgeable gap between sinful man and the holy God.

But that’s not all. Not only is Christ the *High Priest* of the New Covenant: He is also the “*Mediator*” of this “*covenant*.” In other words, He is the “go-between.” He is the One who guarantees that both God’s end and Man’s end of the New Covenant will be upheld. **As God**, He is able to uphold God’s promise of salvation and forgiveness of sins; and as **Man**, He is able to uphold *Man’s* end of the covenant. As a Man, Christ kept the Law perfectly, on our behalf, and died for our sins, in our place: therefore, God the Father is able to accept *every man* who will believe on His Son, and place himself *in Him*. Have you placed yourself “in Christ”? Or are you *outside* the Ark of Jesus, and foolishly dreaming that when the Flood of God’s judgment comes, you will be safe? Listen, friends: when the mega tsunami waves of God’s wrath come crashing down, you won’t be able to ride out the billows in the rickety little “canoe” of your own righteousness! On the Judgment Day, you *must* be in the Ark of Jesus!

Now, how does the New Covenant compare to the Old Covenant? Who was the mediator of *the Old Covenant*, and what was *his* role? Let’s take a look.

Read Galatians 3:19.

This verse is very important. Let’s take it apart. First, Paul says that the Law was “*added because of transgressions, till the seed should come.*” This means that before Christ (the Seed) came to earth, the Law was preparing people for Christ by teaching them what they needed to know about their sin problem. The Law *defined* sin, and *declared the penalty* of sin, so that people would realise that they were *condemned* by their sin, and in need of a Saviour.

With this in mind, let’s look at **verse 19** again. (**Read verse 19.**) Paul says that “the Law” (or, the Old Covenant) was given “*in the hand of a mediator.*” Who was that mediator? It was Moses! Moses was the one who went up to the top of Mount Sinai on behalf of the nation of Israel, and received the Law from God. Moses was Israel’s representative to God.

So, then, if Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, how did *Moses* measure to his role as mediator? Well, he was a godly man; but he was still a sinner, and thus could not keep the Law perfectly. Just like the people of Israel, Moses was a sinner. How, then, could Moses save himself, much less *other* sinners? He couldn’t! The Law *condemned* Moses, just as it did *all* the people of Israel.

Read Galatians 3:10-12.

What was God’s promise to Israel in the Old Covenant? God’s promise was, “*If you keep this covenant, you will remain in the land, and I will bless you. But if you break this covenant, and I will curse you, and uproot you from the land, and scatter you.*” Need I point out how this worked out for Israel? The Jewish people *didn’t* keep the Covenant. They *couldn’t* keep it, because they were sinners. Well, guess what? This means that *we* are in trouble, too. God’s standard is, “If you keep my Law perfectly, and you will have life. But if you break my Law even once, you will bear the curse of your sin.” By this standard, every single man and woman on the face of this earth is under God’s curse, and condemned to hell!

That is why Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a “***better covenant.***” Christ’s New Covenant is established upon “***better promises.***” It contains the promise of a Saviour—a High Priest—a Mediator—who would perfectly uphold man’s end of the covenant, so that God can accept us!

Christian, how precious is Jesus to you? To those of us who are saved, Jesus Christ is “***elect,***” and “***precious.***” He has saved you, and washed you with His blood. You should love Him more today than you did on the day you were saved. You should love Him more today than you did *yesterday*. How precious is He to you, Christian? I would also ask, “Do you *know* Jesus Christ?” Have you cried out to Him in repentance and faith, and asked Him to save you from all your sin? If you haven’t, you *must*—if you would see the Kingdom of God! “***Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***”

II. A Superior Covenant (vv. 7-13)

(**Read verses 7-13.**) In this passage, Paul lists three ways in which the promises of the New Covenant are “better” than the promises of the Old Covenant; and, just in case anyone in his audience should think that Paul is “making this stuff up,” he backs up everything that he says with Scripture. From **verse 8** to **verse 12**, Paul is quoting from **Jeremiah 31**.

Christian, I would encourage you to commit to memory the verses that we are about to read. I’d also encourage you become very familiar with the whole chapter of **Jeremiah 31**. These verses are *very* important. They are the key to understanding many truths about the nation of Israel, about the church age, and about prophecy. These verses are God’s announcement to Israel that the Mosaic Covenant was going to be replaced by a new and superior Covenant.

With this in mind, let’s look at the Scripture that Paul is quoting.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

The message of these verses is crystal clear. God was announcing to Israel that one day, He would establish a “New” Covenant with them. Now, this has profound implications! The very fact that God promised to establish a “New” Covenant shows that there was a “flaw” with the *Old* Covenant. Otherwise, why would a *new* covenant be needed?

Let’s look at these verses one by one, and see why the promises of the “New Covenant” are better those of the Old Covenant. First of all, **the New Covenant is “better” than the Old because it is unconditional.** (Read verses **Hebrews 8:7-9** again.)

Look carefully at what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that there was a “fault” with the Old Covenant. Yet, the “fault” was not in the *Law itself*. There was nothing “bad” about the Law. God’s laws are good, and right, and perfect! Rather, Paul says in **verse 8** that God found fault “*with them*” (with the children of Israel). The problem wasn’t the Covenant itself: the problem was with the *people* to whom the Covenant was given. The problem was that Israel couldn’t *keep* the Law. They couldn’t *live up* to their end of the Covenant. **Yet, God knew this from the very start!** God made the first Covenant *conditional* upon their keeping the Law, even though He knew they couldn’t keep it. So, what was the *purpose* of the First Covenant, then? Why did God give Israel the Covenant of the Law, when He knew that they couldn’t live up to it? Let’s go to **Galatians 3** to find the answer.

Read Galatians 3:21-24.

The Old Covenant couldn’t give anyone spiritual and eternal life. If it could have given them eternal life, then there would have been no need for the New Covenant. Why, then, did God give them the Law? God gave Israel the Law so that it could be their “schoolmaster,” to prepare them (and all of us) for the Saviour. The Law teaches us that if we do not keep God’s commandments perfectly, we are condemned: and since we *can’t* keep it perfectly, we therefore need a Saviour. That is where the *sacrifices* of the Law came in. The sacrifices taught the worshippers that one day the *true* Lamb of God would pay the price for our sins.

In the passage that we read in **Jeremiah 31**, Jeremiah pointed out the painful fact that the people had broken the Covenant. They did not meet the “condition” of the Covenant; therefore, God broke His Covenant with them. That is why the New Covenant is *superior*. It is superior because it is *unconditional*. God told Israel that the New Covenant would “*not*” be “*according to the covenant*” that He “*made with their fathers.*” In other words, the New Covenant would not be conditioned upon their keeping the Law, as the Old one was.

Now, here is where most people “get off the wagon,” and reject the Bible. They say, “Wait a minute! How could the New Covenant be *unconditional*? You mean salvation is *free*? If salvation were free, then it would be ‘cheap’!” My friend, if this be what you think, then you are missing the whole point of salvation. Salvation is *not* “cheap”! It was purchased at the highest, most precious price possible. Our salvation cost the blood of the sinless Son of God! Christ bought salvation *for* us! Salvation is free to us; but it was not free for *Him*. That is why it is an insult to God to offer Him your good works and religiosity, and expect that God will save you because you are a “good person”! If you think that you will get into Heaven because you have been a “good person,” then you are telling God, “I *reject* what your Son did for me!”

The New covenant is built upon better promises because it is *unconditional*. Christ did it all *for* us. He upholds *our* end of the Covenant *for* us. However, that is not all. There is another reason why the promises of the New Covenant are “better.” **The New Covenant is also better than the Old Covenant because it gives us a new heart.**

(**Read Hebrews 8:10-11 again.**) Jeremiah is making an earth-shaking prophecy, here. He is telling the people of Old Testament Israel that there was coming a day when it would no longer be necessary for Israel to be *taught* to “know the Lord,” because they would *all* know

Him. God's Law would be "written in their hearts." Other Old Testament passages gave this same promise, as well. In **Ezekiel 36**, God stated that this "**new heart**" would be made possible by the Holy Spirit, who would come to live inside all believers.

Now, in the Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit did not *indwell* believers (not permanently, that is). Even Christ's disciples did not have the Holy Spirit living inside them until after Christ's resurrection! Now, this does not mean that they were not saved. They *were* saved. The Holy Spirit was *with* them, and *near* them; but He was not *in* them. The Holy Spirit gave them light and understanding; but He did not *indwell* them. For this reason, they did not have nearly the measure of divine light and understanding that Christians have today.

Now, the Holy Spirit did indwell some Old Testament believers *temporarily*. For example, when David was anointed to be the next king of Israel, the Holy Spirit came upon him, to empower him for his task. The Spirit also came upon the prophets, to empower them to prophesy, and to lead the people. However, the Spirit did not stay with them permanently. He stayed with them to empower them for a task; but then, He left for a season.

I have good news for you, though: this is not the case with believers today! Because of the promises of the New Covenant, the moment a sinner trusts in Jesus as his Saviour, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell him forever. The Holy Spirit gives believers a new heart and nature, new desires, and the power to obey. He gives the sinner a personal knowledge of God, which he didn't have before. The Holy Spirit helps the believer to understand the Bible, whereas before he was saved, the Bible made no sense to Him. I remember how the Bible "came alive" to me after I was saved! This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside believers.

Read Ephesians 1:12-14.

Read John 14:16-23, 26.

Believers who lived under the Old Covenant were saved in the same way that you and I are saved--by faith alone! Salvation was granted to them because they believed that the Saviour was coming; and they placed their trust in that coming Saviour. **However, they did not have the privilege of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as we believers have today.** Christian, do not take this privilege for granted! This is one of the wonderful blessings of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is "**better**" because it is unconditional. It is "**better**" because it gives us a new heart. It is also better because **it provides forgiveness of sins.** (Read **Hebrews 8:12-13.**)

This is the best part of the New Covenant! This is what makes the New Covenant infinitely superior to the Old Covenant. The *Old Covenant* could *not* take away sins. The only thing the Old Covenant could do was to inform us that we were *cursed* because of our sin. However, in the New Covenant, God made the provision to have our sins removed. In the New Covenant, God provided His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the price for our sins. Jeremiah didn't say, "Their sins will be forgiven *if* they keep the Law sufficiently." He didn't say, "They'll be on

probation until the end of their lives, and then it will be determined if they will ‘make heaven.’” No, he said, **“Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”**

Nothing surpasses the joy and peace of *being 100% certain* that you are on your way to Heaven! Do *you* have that certainty? If you don’t have that certainty, then you are probably not saved. If you *were* saved, you’d be sure of it, because you would understand that salvation is not *your* doing, but *Christ’s* doing. If you were truly saved, you’d have the absolute confidence that what Jesus did for you is all you need. Should there be any doubt in your mind that you are saved, **you need to get it settled today!**

As Paul wraps up this chapter, he once again focuses in on the **“new covenant.”** (Read **Hebrews 8:13** again.) Paul is making a very logical point, here. If a “New” Covenant was coming, then the Mosaic Covenant would become “old.” In fact, Paul says that the Old Covenant was, at that very moment, “decaying, waxing old, and ready to vanish away.” The sacrifices of animals were still going on in the Temple at the time when Paul wrote this letter; but within five years, the whole sacrificial system was destroyed. In A.D. 70, God allowed the Roman general Titus to destroy the Temple, and the entire city of Jerusalem. On that horrible day, God made a strong statement to the nation of Israel. He said, “The Old Covenant is done!” Sadly, the nation of Israel, as a whole, still has not heeded that message. Most of them are still rejecting their Saviour.

By the way, it is important to realise that God did make the New Covenant with the nation of *Israel*. **Jeremiah 31:31** clearly says that God would make a new covenant with the **“whole house of Israel.”** This means that God is not done with Israel. God has *not* cast off Israel forever. He *will* restore them to Himself. Over and over again, God promised that Israel *will*, as an entire nation, partake of the New Covenant. When will this happen? Also, how do we Gentiles fit into the New Covenant, if God made the New Covenant with *Israel*? Paul answers both these questions for us in **Romans 11**.

Read Romans 11:7-27.

Here’s what Paul is saying, in a nutshell. God made the New Covenant with the nation of Israel. That Covenant was sealed with Christ’s blood on Calvary. However, as a *nation*, Israel is rejecting the New Covenant; therefore, *as a nation*, they are not receiving its blessings. However, on the future day when **“all Israel shall be saved,”** they *will* receive the blessing. And what *are* the blessings of the New Covenant? They are twofold.

First, there is the **physical, material blessing**. One day, Israel will dwell safely in the Promised Land, with the Messiah in their midst. This will happen during Christ’s future 1,000-year Kingdom, when He is reigning over the entire world from His throne in Jerusalem.

Secondly, there is the **spiritual blessing**. This is the blessing of salvation, and of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. *As a nation*, Israel will receive this blessing just after the Tribulation, when Christ returns to earth. Israel will be prepared, during the Tribulation, to repent and receive Jesus as their Messiah. Multitudes of Jews will be saved during the seven years of the Tribulation through the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses whom God

will raise up. Then, when Christ sits down on His throne, and the glorious Kingdom age begins, literally *every Jew on earth* will be saved, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In the meantime, both Jewish *and* Gentile believers are benefiting from the *spiritual* promise of the New Covenant. Every day, Gentiles are being “grafted in” to the “olive tree” of Israel by placing their faith in Jesus of Nazareth. We Gentile believers do not have the material promise of living in the *land of Israel* during the Kingdom, because we are not Jews.

However, we do have the most important promise—**the promise of an *eternal salvation***.

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask that all-important question: “Do you know for sure that you are saved?” Christ has paid for your sins *in full*. Yet, salvation will not be forced on you. Salvation is offered, as a free gift, to all who choose to place their trust in Christ. If you have never entrusted your soul to Jesus, *please* run to Him today, and let Him carry you across the Great Divide!

If you *are* saved, I would ask, “How thankful are you for what Christ has done for you?” You have received the priceless gift of salvation. You also have privilege of having the Holy Spirit living inside you, to guide you into all truth. Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to have full control of your life? If you need to surrender control of some area of your life, let the Spirit have His way with you today!