

The Excellency of the New Covenant

Hebrews 8:6

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

HEBREWS 8:6-13

6- BUT NOW HE HAS OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY, BY AS MUCH AS HE IS ALSO THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHICH HAS BEEN ENACTED ON BETTER PROMISES.

7- FOR IF THAT FIRST COVENANT HAD BEEN FAULTLESS THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO OCCASION SOUGHT FOR A SECOND.

8- 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;**

9-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.

10- "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.

11- "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.

12- "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS MORE."

13- WHEN HE SAID, "A NEW COVENANT," HE HAS MADE THE FIRST OBSOLETE, BUT WHATEVER IS BECOMING OBSOLETE AND GROWING OLD IS READY TO DISAPPEAR.

Forgiveness of sin, hatred of sin, and love toward God; all of these blessings are promised to us in the new covenant. The new covenant is not a secondary or side issue in the life of the church; it is the very core of our communion with God. Whoever does not partake in the new covenant is lost and under the wrath of God now. The new covenant is the only means ordained by God through which a sinner is saved. Since we have all sinned, it is vital that we enter into this covenant, and put our faith in the priest, the surety, the sacrifice, and mediator of it, our Lord Jesus Christ who has ratified it in his own blood.

The new covenant is such a rich and dense subject that we cannot fully examine it in one sermon. Therefore we will consider 3 points this morning, by God's Grace, to help us better understand our God that redeemed us.

1. Jesus Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant
2. A Better Covenant, Enacted on Better Promises
3. The Covenant is Enacted/Established now

Before we expound these 3 points we need to ask the question, "What is a divine covenant?" This question is not easy to answer. The problem one encounters when attempting to define a divine covenant is producing a broad enough definition that can cover all the ways covenants are used in the bible. Covenants can be between men, or God and man, and do not always have the same signs or seals.

For example: The Davidic Covenant

In 2 Samuel 7 God promises, "I WILL RAISE UP YOUR DESCENDANT AFTER YOU, WHO WILL COME FORTH FROM YOU, AND I WILL ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM."(vs12)

And, "YOUR HOUSE AND YOUR KINGDOM SHALL ENDURE BEFORE ME FOREVER; YOUR THRONE SHALL BE ESTABLISHED FOREVER."(vs 16)

Notice that the word "covenant" is not used in this passage. But we know from Psalm 89:3-4 that indeed God did make a covenant with David.

"I HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH MY CHOSEN; I HAVE SWORN TO DAVID MY SERVANT, I WILL ESTABLISH YOUR SEED FOREVER AND BUILD UP YOUR THRONE TO ALL GENERATIONS." SELAH

If you read 5 books about the divine covenants, you probably will get 5 different definitions of the term.

John Owen- an absolutely complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and disposal of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage.

Robert Martin- an oath-bound promise

Richard Barcellos- relational arrangement initiated by God's sovereign dispensing of his kindness, goodness, and wisdom toward man.

O. Palmer Robertson- a bond in blood, sovereignly administered

The context of our passage in the book of Hebrews leans toward the last definition. We will use this definition for our purposes today.

Heb.9:16-18 FOR WHERE A COVENANT IS, THERE MUST OF NECESSITY BE THE DEATH OF THE ONE WHO MADE IT. FOR A COVENANT IS VALID ONLY WHEN MEN ARE DEAD, FOR IT IS NEVER IN FORCE WHILE THE ONE WHO MADE IT LIVES. THEREFORE EVEN THE FIRST COVENANT WAS NOT INAUGURATED WITHOUT BLOOD.

A covenant is a bond in blood, sovereignly administered.

Vs 6- BUT NOW HE HAS OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

"Now," as in this present time, Christ is ministering to his sheep.

Heb 7:25 THEREFORE HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE FOREVER THOSE WHO DRAW NEAR TO GOD THROUGH HIM, SINCE HE ALWAYS LIVES TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM

Christ intercedes to the Father on our behalf, our advocate in the presence of the Father. He presented his blood on the mercy seat in the heavenly temple and sent

the Holy Spirit, whom he called the "comforter." His ministry or work is out of love for his Father and love for his people. Think of our Lord's earthly ministry. What sinner did Christ ever turn away that was coming to him for mercy?

Was Christ ever too busy to go out of his way to bless a blind beggar crying out for mercy? The love of Christ has not changed. After his resurrection he spent 40 days with the disciples strengthening them and comforting them, promising to not leave them as orphans, and that he would send the Holy Spirit to empower them. Brothers and sisters Christ has not turned his back on his church.

The ministry, or the workings, of Christ can never be loved or meditated upon enough. That is his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. Christ's works are the very source of mercy and grace. Pastor Blair often says that we are saved by Christ's works, as well as his death. The ministry of our Lord to fulfill all the requirements of the first covenant on behalf of his church.

BUT NOW HE HAS OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

Our text says that Christ *obtained* this ministry. It was the loving will of God the Father to commission and send his only begotten son into the world to die on behalf of his children. It isn't as if Christ came opposed to his father's will, or of his own will absolutely. It has been the plan of God from the beginning to redeem his people through the death of Christ. Christ was commissioned to the work and willfully and joyfully performed it.

Phil. 2:6-11

WHO, ALTHOUGH, HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. FOR THIS REASON ALSO, GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM, AND BESTOWED ON HIM THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, SO THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, OF THOSE WHO ARE IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH, AND THAT EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.

Indeed the wrath of God is on every sinner, but at the same time he glorifies His name by sending his son as a propitiation (to appease anger, to set at peace). Justice must be executed for all sins ever committed, either God's wrath will be poured out upon you, or on Christ. Christ absorbed in his own body the punishment due to his people by being their mediator.

A mediator is the go-between or middle person between God and man that resolves the conflict between them to bring about peace.

But Christ goes above this definition because he is the better "MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT." Jesus Christ is the mediator, priest, the surety or guarantee, and the sacrifice of the covenant all in one person. But why do we need a mediator in the first place? Because we have all rebelled against God and placed ourselves above God. We have offended him and are his enemies by nature.

Rom 8:7-8 BECAUSE THE MIND SET ON THE FLESH IS HOSTILE TOWARD GOD; FOR IT DOES NOT SUBJECT ITSELF TO THE LAW OF GOD, FOR IT IS NOT EVEN ABLE TO DO SO, AND THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD.

There was no need of a mediator before the fall of man, for Adam walked with God in perfect communion and holiness. Look how the relationship changed after sin entered, Adam and Eve are ashamed and hide from God, they blame everyone else for their sin. They were cast out of the garden and God put a fiery sword to guard the tree of life. Humanity is naturally evil and against God. All "good" works before we are born again are offensive to God. We do those deeds for our own glory and not for the glory of God. The atheist may appear friendly and generous, but he has risen in his pride declaring that he has no need of God, and goes on without a mediator and has counted the blood of Christ a common thing. John 3:36 HE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON HAS ETERNAL LIFE; BUT HE WHO DOES NOT OBEY THE SON WILL NOT SEE LIFE, BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDES OF HIM. We see our desperate need of a mediator to go between us, and the Holy God who dwells in unapproachable light.

A mediator must be on good terms with both parties of the covenant. The Father announces his love for Jesus in a few places.

Isa 42:1 BEHOLD, MY SERVANT, WHOM I UPHOLD; MY CHOSEN ONE IN WHO MY SOUL DELIGHTS. I HAVE PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM; HE WILL BRING FORTH JUSTICE TO THE NATIONS.

Matt 3:17 AND BEHOLD, A VOICE OUT OF THE HEAVENS SAID, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL-PLEASED."

Our mediator gives himself as ransom. He does not point us somewhere else or ask us to provide a bull or goat to offer on the altar. He himself performs and executes everything required. The apostle Paul ties Christ's office of mediator with his role of sacrifice.

1 Tim 2:5-6

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR ALSO BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, WHO GAVE HIMSELF AS A RANSOM FOR ALL, THE TESTIMONY GIVEN AT THE PROPER TIME.

How blasphemous is the Roman Catholic Church? To teach that Mary the mother of Jesus is the "Mediatix" (feminine form of mediator). That Mary by her prayers mediates to Christ for us. They say she is the "neck that turns the head of grace." Seeing the glories of Christ's mediation how can one run to Mary rather than our Lord? Mary did not work as Jesus worked. Mary did not give herself as ransom. And Mary herself wouldn't want anyone asking her for forgiveness.

Jesus is loved by both parties, that is the Father and the church. But he also partakes of both of their natures. He is the God- Man, 100% God 100% Man without conflict or compromise.

Heb 2:14 THEREFORE, SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT RENDER POWERLESS HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL

PHIL 2:7b-8a BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN

Christ is the perfect mediator in all ways. One way in particular is that he shares the natures of both covenanting parties in his one person. The Gospel of John calls Jesus the "Word." "THE WORD WAS WITH GOD AND THE WORD WAS GOD."

And also "THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US." Jesus Christ was born of woman under the law into a real body, to redeem those who broke the law. He ate, he slept, he got tired. He was like us in every way, yet without sin.

The earliest heresies attacking the church were what? None other than the ones that denied the humanity of Jesus Christ. Being influenced by Greek philosophy, the Gnostics believed the physical realm and all flesh was to be shunned and escaped from. That Jesus was just a pure spirit and only appeared to have a body. The earliest apologists of the church dealt with this heresy. If Jesus did not have a physical body to endure the punishment that was due to us, how can we expect our fleshly bodies to escape punishment in hell? How can we expect to have a resurrected fleshly body if Christ's body didn't resurrect? Very important issue. It would be better to be killed in this life, rather than to deny our Lord's humanity. If you deny his humanity, he is not your mediator. If he's not your mediator, you're lost.

Another heresy that the early church fought was called Arianism. Arius taught that Jesus was a created being, and that he was not actually God. A direct assault on his office of mediator, and therefore our salvation through him. The church assembled at the Council of Nicea in AD 325 to discuss this teaching that arose. They condemned it and wrote a creed to express their view on the person of Jesus Christ. Here is an excerpt from that creed:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

Christ's humanity and divinity directly effect us, in that he has to partake of both natures to be the mediator of the New Covenant.

Heb 8:6 BUT NOW HE HAS OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY, BY AS MUCH AS HE IS ALSO THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHICH HAS BEEN ENACTED ON BETTER PROMISES.

The old covenant had certain promises, and the new covenant has promises. The apostle Paul intends to show the supremacy of the new, to persuade the Hebrews of his day that were being tempted to go back to the old covenant. We will first show the purpose of the old covenant.

-The Mosaic covenant was not intended to give eternal life or eternal damnation.

Adam and Eve were created in God's image. Therefore they had the law written upon their conscience, and lived a blameless life. All people are in the image of God still, but our consciences are marred by sin, not destroyed.

Rom 1:19-21a BECAUSE THAT WHICH IS KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS EVIDENT WITHIN THEM; FOR GOD MADE IT EVIDENT TO THEM. FOR SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE, HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE. FOR EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT HONOR HIM AS GOD

Rom 2:14-15 FOR WHEN GENTILES WHO DO NOT HAVE THE LAW DO INSTINCTIVELY THE THINGS OF THE LAW, ARE A LAW TO THEMSELVES, IN THAT THEY SHOW THE WORK OF THE LAW WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS, THEIR CONSCIENCE BEARING WITNESS AND THEIR THOUGHTS ALTERNATELY ACCUSING OR ELSE DEFENDING THEM

The law of God was perfectly obeyed by Adam and Eve until the fall. After the fall, we still have some degree of our previous conscience. That's why we believe that stealing, murder, and other crimes are "evil." This law of God stands whether or not we know it. The breaking of this law is what grieved God so much that he flooded the whole world, sparing Noah. This law stands and demands that all sinners die the death. Adam could've obeyed perfectly and inherited eternal life symbolized by the tree of life, but he rebelled and doomed himself and all his posterity to live in sin. Cut off from eternal life outside of the garden. This is the law that Jesus Christ performed perfectly, and he absorbed the curse of this law. Therefore he can give eternal life to whoever believes in him.

Rev 22:14 BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO WASH THEIR ROBES, SO THAT THEY MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, AND MAY ENTER BY THE GATES INTO THE CITY.

-The Old Covenant was given because of transgressions.

Gal 3:19-22 WHY THE LAW THEN? IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS, HAVING BEEN ORDAINED THROUGH ANGELS BY THE AGENCY OF A MEDIATOR, UNTIL THE SEED WOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE HAD BEEN MADE. NOW A MEDIATOR IS NOT FOR ONE PARTY ONLY; WHEREAS GOD IS ONLY ONE. IS THE LAW THEN CONTRARY TO THE PROMISES OF GOD? MAY IT NEVER BE! FOR IF A LAW HAD BEEN GIVEN WHICH WAS ABLE TO IMPART LIFE, THEN RIGHTEOUSNESS WOULD INDEED HAVE BEEN BASED ON LAW. BUT THE SCRIPTURE HAS SUT UP EVERYONE UNDER SIN, SO THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE.

The Law given at Sinai pricked the consciences of those men, to show them their overwhelming sin and lawlessness. It had reminders of the garden of Eden, do this and live, or do this and in dying you will die. The law Paul also says the law was our school master to show us that we can never be perfect and are actually quite evil, and that we desperately need a savior. We would be prone to rise up in pride and arrogance to declare ourselves righteous without the law. Sadly, some people declare themselves sinless today.

The old covenant had shadows and types that pointed the church to Christ. The Passover lamb, the yearly sacrifices for sins. All of these things the writer of Hebrews has been stressing, saying this new covenant is the reality that the old pointed to. The principal end of the first covenant was to discover sin and condemn it. The principal end of the new covenant is to show grace, mercy, love, and to grant repentance, and forgiveness of sins.

“WHICH HAS BEEN ENACTED ON BETTER PROMISES.”

The new covenant is now enacted or established. All the shadows and types that signified of the coming Redeemer. The Seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent has now come. The Seed of Abraham who would bless all the nations of the world has come. The new covenant the prophets prophesied about has been ratified in Christ's own blood. No mere promises to lay hold to, but an actual ratified Covenant establishing all the promises.

Isa 53:5 BUT HE WAS PIERCED THROUGH FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTENING FOR OUR WELL-BEING FELL UPON HIM, AND BY HIS SCOURGING WE ARE HEALED

Purchased and guaranteed by Christ our Lord.

These promises are purchased and ready to be enjoyed today. Your sins are removed today, now. God through the Holy Spirit writing his law on the hearts rather than the stone tablets under the old covenant. No more do we stand afar off from God, at the bottom of the mountain. But Christ our mediator goes and breaks down the division between the sinful and the holy. Many saints have not had the privilege of knowing so much about Jesus. They were saved by believing in the promised seed, looking forward. We have so much more, be able to look back at the cross, and God accepting the sacrifice by raising him from the dead.

Eph 2:8-9 FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THEGIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST.

The new covenant has been accomplished and must be entered into by faith. It is better than the covenant of works. Do not expect to redeem yourself through your works. Believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sins now.

Amen