

A better covenant (2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] We're going to be thinking about the covenants or covenants.

That's what we were thinking about last time. That's the bit in Hebrews that we've got to. And my general aim, and I think the aim of this passage, is to make us glad if we have a covenant with God or to make us wish we did have a covenant with God if we haven't got one.

And last time I was asking the boys and girls, and they helped us with this. Covenants and arrangements, covenant-like arrangements, can have promises and gifts and conditions and various things like that.

And they can be either very much to do with relating to people or quite mechanical. So boys and girls, have you ever seen an ATM?

Does anybody know what an ATM is, boys and girls? What an ATM is. Do you know what an ATM is? It's a money machine. It is a money machine. That's right. How does it work?

[1:03] You put in something that shows that this is your money. So it comes to a treatment bag and then they give it to you.

Okay. So you put something in that shows it's your money. Does anybody know what the something is? What do you put in? A bank card. A bank card. That's right. And do you know what you have to do next?

Do you know what you have to do next when you put the bank card in? Tell us your dad's pin while you're there. Do you know what you have to do? You don't know.

Do you know? You put the code in the machine, that's right. And then you get the money out. Now, boys and girls, when you do that, do you really feel that now you love the people at the bank more? Do you feel that you really know them? And you think, oh, these lovely people at the bank have given me my money. No, because it's actually your money.

[2:04] So they're basically, and it doesn't matter if it's your money. They just get it because it's them. I just get it because they get you. They just get you from some other money because it's just, they think if this is how much money you want, then that's how much money you want.

Yeah, that's right. That's how much money you want. They just give you the money. And it's done by a machine. But some other things like that, you actually get to know people and you sort of get to like them or not like them.

So it could be to do with mechanical, looks like a machine, or... Oh, it's just stopped. Let's try again. I don't know what happened there.

Where were we? Yeah, it can be mechanical or relational.

And what I'm going to try and say to all of us later is that when God makes a covenant, it's not mechanical. It's just, it's very relational. You actually get to know somebody in it.

[3:17] So we did this last time. How many people get pocket money? Just one, wasn't it? You got pocket money. Yeah, good. You get pocket money. She's the person they go to for money. And we talked about buying, making cakes and buying and selling cakes.

We talked about getting married, which is a very strong relational sort of covenant. And we talked about a will. And there was a condition of a will. What happens, what has to happen before somebody can benefit from a will?

You have to die. Somebody has to die. That's right. And so these are all sorts of different arrangements of various sorts. And I'm sort of sneaking up on the idea of what God has made in a covenant with us.

And I also said that somebody is responsible to make the covenant work. If there's a problem, somebody needs to put it right. And in the Bible, Jesus is the guarantee of the new covenant. He takes it on himself to make it all go right. So boys and girls, look at this one. Can you tell me what these, that, there's that one. Okay. Can you see it? There's that one.

[4:24] And there's that one. Okay. So I'm going to talk about old and new covenants. Now, does anybody know what those things are? Because when I was little, my mum and my gran didn't actually do that, but they did something very much like it.

Anybody know what they are? Do you know? Washing. Is he right? I don't know. Washing. Can anybody tell us about this washing? Does anybody know what's happening there? Yeah. They've got to be under 20 to answer this. Yes. Go on.

Who was going to answer it? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Let's do this one first.

Let's do that one first. Does anybody know, does anybody know the name of the machine? No.

You've got to be under 20. I've got to open this up to over 20s in a minute.

[5:32] Anybody know the name of the machine? No. Okay. Right. Over 20s. Mangle. This is called a mangle. That's a mangle.

Does anybody know how a mangle works? I'm sure my mum used to use a mangle. Do you know how a mangle works? I shouldn't ask you all the time. I should just swap it around. Yeah. Go on. Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

I'll stop you there. You have to turn. It's not a lever. It's a handle, isn't it? You have to turn a handle and the washing goes through. What's the difference between the washing before it's gone through and after it's gone through?

Because you've got those rollers and you go like this and you put the washing in here and they go through the rollers and then it comes out between the rollers on the other side.

What's the difference between the washing when it goes in and when it comes out? No different.

What do you think? They come out drier and more straight.

[6:36] Yeah. They come out drier and more straight. Yeah. That's right. It's a way of drying it, sort of squeeze the clothes through the mangle. I'm pretty sure my mum and my gran used to have a mangle when doing the washing when I was quite little.

They didn't only do the washing when I was quite little. They did the washing all the way through my life. But I just remember it when I was quite little. Yeah. It's okay. It's a mangle. Okay.

So we do this one. Somebody was going to tell us about that one. Who was going to tell us about that one? Has he gone? Tell us about this one. What's this one? I think we need a relay to tell us what...

Because I couldn't quite hear that. Sorry. You can use a bit of a tablet. It's a bit like a pill. It's in the washing machine.

Ah. Right. So you put things in there with the washing... Tablet. Tablet. Yeah. That's right. When my mum used to do it, you had a...

[8:02] The very old-fashioned way of doing it is to put it in a bucket and just go like that with a sort of... A dolly. That's right. That's what it's called. A dolly. Yeah. So this one, you put the dirty clothes in.

You put in a washing tablet. You close the door. You press a button. Yeah. And what happens then? It cleans your washing.

And it's great fun. If you haven't got a television, you can just sit and watch it. Because it goes...

Like that. And our television wasn't working.

We had hours of fun just watching the washing going down. Yeah. Okay. So it goes right now. What else does it do? So it... What did you say? It cleans the washing. Now, some of them do more than that.

Steam the clothes. Steam the clothes. Stay. Stay? That's after my white drawing. Okay. Yeah.

[9:09] That's when it goes wrong. Yes. You put something white in with something coloured and it comes out the wrong colour. That wasn't quite what I had in mind. But cleaning the clothes and... They shrink.

They shrink. All these family secrets coming out. This is... Yeah. What I was thinking was it dries the clothes as well.

Because it spins them and dries them. And sometimes it will even sort of make the clothes hot and dry as well. It's all sorts of wonderful things. One big difference between this and this is...

Just if you look... Let me see if we can get one really big difference between them. I might have to give you a prompt.

A really big difference. One's old fashioned, one's new fashioned. Is that right? That's certainly true.

[10:09] One's old and one's new. Yes. Oh, I should have told you which one that was. It's a LGV7... Because previously when I put up advertisements, I didn't say what they're advertisements for.

So I'm telling you that's from AO.com. So, yeah. Big difference. You have to use your hands.

I guess you can. You have to be pressing your muscles. Put them open. Put a part of that. It spins on the muscles. Okay. So you don't use your muscle power on this one.

What do you use instead? You let the machine work on. Mm-hmm. She's 22. Yeah. She's older than 20.

Yeah. That was one I was trying to get that. That's just human power. And this one's got extra power in it, hasn't it? Because you connect it to the electricity. So they both do the same thing.

[11:12] They're both clean clothes. The second one hopefully does it better. And one thing about the first and the second one, that's just human power.

And this one's got extra electrical power in it. And I was thinking, this is a little bit like the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. They're both trying to do the same thing.

The Old Covenant relies a lot on human power, where the New Covenant, one of the big differences, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Extra power to produce the effects.

And, of course, the way the Hebrews writer would say is, if you've got the new one, who would bother going back to the old one? That's right, isn't it?

If you've got one of these at home, you wouldn't say, oh, well, today we'll put the clothes in a tub and jump on them and fling them around to dry. Then we might as well use that.

[12:10] And the writers of the Hebrews would say, now we've got Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Who would want to go back to that old way of being God's people?

Oh, yeah. What's the word obsolete mean? Anybody know what the word obsolete means? So let's have people over 20.

The word obsolete means? Not useful anymore. Thank you. Not useful anymore. You wouldn't go back to the old thing because it's not useful anymore. And in the reading, it said the Old Covenant is obsolete.

Okay. Thanks, boys and girls. We're going to sing another song about asking God to speak to us. And Mark might click us on and we'll find the music.

Let's pray again. Lord, we do indeed pray that you will feed us and stir us and cause our hearts to rise in faith and that we will have a view of your glory and that you will be speaking to us as we think about your word this morning.

[13:25] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So following on from what we were just talking about with the boys and girls with the old and new covenants, we're going to look a bit more specifically about what it says in Hebrews chapter 8.

So if you've got a Bible, please turn up Hebrews chapter 8. When he makes the contrast between these covenants.

So in chapter 8, verse 7, he says, If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. Now I looked up the word another and it actually says a second.

So we've got the first covenant and the second covenant. But it says there was something went wrong. In verse 8, it says, no, I should explain that we have a, the writer to the Hebrews is quoting from a prophecy of Jeremiah.

So he's looking in the Old Testament and the Old Testament looks forward and says there needs to be a New Testament. That's what the quote is. And the quote says, the time is coming, declares the

Lord, when I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah.

[14:40] It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand, etc. And it talks about a new covenant. And in verse 13, the writer to the Hebrews now says, By calling this covenant new, he has made the first one obsolete, which was the word that we thought of earlier.

And what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. Now his purpose in making that comment is that his readers, we assume, were being tempted to go back from straightforward faith in Christ to back to the synagogue and the temple and the rituals and all that sort of thing.

They were tempted to go back to that. And he says, you don't want to go back to that because that's obsolete. That's old. What you want is to stick with the new covenant, whose mediator and guarantor is Jesus.

Of course, the same thing applies in a sense to our generation, where we have simple, straightforward faith in Jesus Christ and his word.

And then various competing forms of religion, which are sort of like the old covenant, rituals, earthly based, to do with rules and regulations.

[16:08] And the same thing would apply. Why would you want that sort of thing when you've got Jesus? And that's not obsolete. That's the covenant that you want to be in. So following this through a little bit further, in chapter, in verse 9, he says, Is it verse 9?

Yeah, verse 9. It says, It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them.

The word faithful isn't in the original. It just says they didn't stick. They didn't remain with the covenant. So remain faithful is the meaning of it, but it just says they didn't remain in the covenant, and it didn't work.

And to get this sense of the way the old covenant and new covenant connect is really important for our understanding of the whole Bible.

And he says that there was a problem with the old covenant, and therefore we need the new covenant. So let's look at some points about the new covenant that he's making. And the first point that I'm going to make is that the new covenant has a guarantee, and it's in chapter 7, verse 22.

[17:27] Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. And the thinking of the writer is quite complex, actually, because he's gone from the oath, which was in Psalm 110.

Is it Psalm 110? You have sworn an oath, I will not change my mind. You are a priest in the order of Melchizedek. So that oath, he then connects with the covenant and says, this is because there's going to be a new priest.

So the old priesthood that belonged to the old covenant is obsolete, and Jesus is the guarantor of a new covenant. So I'll just stop on this idea of guarantee.

Now the writer of the Hebrews is very strong to press us and push us and say, you must stay on the path. You must stick to faith in Jesus Christ.

And he puts that responsibility on us. He says, you cannot afford to just wander. You've got to stick with the Savior. But he will also say that Jesus is the guarantor or the guarantee of the covenant.

[18:41] But on that other side of the coin, Jesus is absolutely determined to have his people safe in heaven. He's been given this task that none of those that the Father has given to him should fail to get to heaven.

So we have this guarantee and this confidence. And a little bit later, we're going to sing this song, He Will Hold Me Fast.

And would you agree with me, brothers and sisters, that it is a great thing to know that we have a guarantee of the new covenant. It's a great thing to know that he will hold us fast.

It's a great thing to know it's not just done on human power. It's not just down to us. So, there's one point about the covenant. Let's make another point. So, I'm now looking at verse 10.

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

[19:47] I will be their God and they will be my people. So, this is a big point of comparison. The old covenant had laws written.

I wonder if any of the boys and girls are still with us enough to say, where were the old laws written? There were 10 of them and they were written somewhere particularly. Do you know where they were?

Yeah. In the Ten Commandments. And where were the Ten Commandments? On a rock. On a rock. Thank you. On a rock. On stone tablets. And actually, the writer refers to those stone tablets in chapter 9, verse 4.

But then the new covenant is not written on big stones. Actually, we've got some big stones here. Can you see them?

And I wondered what was written on them. Does anybody know if anything is written on them? Because I had a look at the beginning. And they've got writing on the other side.

[20:55] That's why we're keeping them, apparently. Yeah, they've got writing on them. But God doesn't write the new covenant on, even on those stones. He writes them on the heart. Right on the inside.

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. So this is something quite special. That God goes right inside people's hearts to change them.

And to put things inside our hearts. That we deeply, it's deep within how we function. What motivates us. What we love.

What we don't love. What we turn away from. And God says, that's the sort of thing I'm going to do in the new covenant. Not on those external stones, but internally. And that's why we sang Purify My Heart.

Because we shouldn't be content, brothers and sisters, with just a sort of Christianity that is doing the right things on the outside. Christianity is to do with God changing, really, the heart.

[22:00] The Bible uses different ways of expressing it. Jesus said, you must be born again. I think meaning the same sort of thing. In the beginning of Ephesians, Paul says, Paul says, we're risen with Christ.

We die with Christ. We're risen with Christ. And there's a deep change right down deep inside. I will put my laws on their hearts.

And put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. And brothers and sisters, we should make it our business as weeks pass by that we've asked God to work on our hearts.

Not just on the outside, but right down deep. Purify my heart and keep on doing so. Verse 10.

Another thing about the new covenant. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel at that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds. I will write them on their hearts.

[23:03] I will be their God and they will be my people. I will be their God. They will be my people. This is a very relational description of both these covenants, actually.

This is what God says in the old covenant. And he says the new covenant fulfills that. But they're both trying to do the same thing. They're both trying to establish this relationship that God says, you'll be my people.

And the people say, you are my God. And you will be for me everything that a God should be for his people. You'll guide me. You'll protect me. You'll look over me.

You'll save me and redeem me. You'll be my strength and my portion. You'll be my God. And God says, I will be that and you will be my people. And I'll shepherd you and care for you and put my arms around you and carry you and direct you.

Very, very relational. So we learn from this, brothers and sisters, that being a Christian is not just external and formal.

[24:15] There's a person-to-person thing happening here. We have a relationship with God, which is a person-to-person relationship.

And person-to-person relationships is not just about doing the right thing on the outside.

Person-to-person relationships have things like this. Honor. You know, I respect this person.

I honor this person. I'm grateful. You know, if you put your money in the ATM and you get the money out, you're hardly grateful to the machine, aren't you?

You don't stand there saying, oh, the machine, I'm so grateful to you. Thank you so much. That's not the way that sort of relationship works. But when God redeems us and frees us from our sins

and Christ died for us, then we are grateful, aren't we?

That changes things. We are grateful from our hearts. And person-to-person relationships involve trust. Now, you don't automatically trust somebody the moment you meet them.

[25:16] That would be a very foolish thing to do. That would be very gullible. But as you get to know somebody and you see how they operate and you see their track record, you begin to say, I can trust somebody to do this.

I actually can't trust them to do that, but I can trust them to do this. And you build a relationship of trust. And God specializes in being faithful. We learn that he can be trusted.

And we learn to love him. And God says, that's what I want you to do. I want you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind. And we want to please him. So in a person-to-person relationship, as it grows and develops, you'll say, I want to please this person. I mean, unless it's a relationship of hostility, which in case you wouldn't be saying this at all. But in a positive relationship, you say, I want to please this person.

I'd like to do something to please them. And so it is with the Lord. And I'd like to walk with this person. And God says, walk with me. And that's the way relationships develop, isn't it?

[26:21] By going for walks. And God says, walk with me. Remember Enoch, who walked with God. And one time, having walked with God, God said, well, rather than you go home for tea, why don't you stay with me forever?

And so Enoch went to be with the Lord. So I will be their God. They will be my people is a fundamental principle.

It's there in the old covenant and it's fulfilled in the new covenant. And I think there was a click here that didn't quite work. Let's see. No, it still didn't work. Then I'm looking at the next bit, which says in verse 11, No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, know the Lord.

For they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest. So this again is about knowing the Lord. So I've got a little diagram, which I hope will work. In the old covenant, some of them knew the Lord.

So look at this. I've got a little diagram coming up. That circle represents all the people who are in the old covenant. So that's the people who have, if they're a man, they've been circumcised.

[27:34] If they're a man or a woman, they are genetically Jewish and descendants of Abraham. So they're in the covenant. But only some of them know the Lord.

So that little green circle, those are the ones who know the Lord. Not all the people in the covenant knew the Lord. David knew the Lord. Moses knew the Lord. You know, go through the list of believing people in the Old Testament.

But some people say, well, I'm in the covenant. I'm a child of Abraham. I've been circumcised. I'm in the covenant. But do you know the Lord? That's the way the old covenant operated.

And in the new covenant, it's different. In the new covenant, no longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother saying, know the Lord, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

So here now is a picture of the people in the new covenant. That's all the people who are in the new covenant. So they're the people who have been circumcised inside the circumcision of the heart.

[28:40] And they're not people who are genetically connected to Abraham, but who walk in the footsteps of faith of Abraham. And these are the people in the new covenant. And they will have a sign.

They won't have been circumcised. They will have been baptized. But the baptism isn't the thing that brings you into the covenant. It's the relationship that brings you into the covenant. And in this new covenant, that's the people who know me.

All the ones in the new covenant know the Lord. Because that's what the new covenant is about. All the people who have faith know the Lord.

All the people who have the circumcision of the heart know the Lord. So the New Testament church, I know it doesn't quite fit. I put a little bit of a gap there.

Because it's not quite perfect. But in principle, all the people who know and trust Jesus Christ know him. That's what a Christian is.

[29:41] And brothers and sisters, this means that being a Christian is for real. It isn't like in the Old Testament where they would say, Oh, well, there's so many people.

They go through all the rituals. But hardly any of them seem to actually really love God inside. No, if you're a Christian, it is for real. Christians are expected to follow the Lord.

Christians are expected to be committed to the Lord. Christians are expected to have the Holy Spirit's promptings within them. Christians are expected to pray.

Christians are expected to read the Bible. Because that's what Christians are. They all know the Lord from the least of them to the greatest. They're all there. They're all on the ball for the Lord Jesus.

So they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest. And the Bible expects Christians to be different. They're not like they used to be.

[30:43] They're not like everybody who is not a Christian. These people live differently. They really do. They're not perfect. But there is a definite difference in their lives.

These people really talk to God. They actually pray. And God hears their prayers. And there is actually something holy about these people.

That's not saying they're perfect. They're still in dwelling sin. But there's something about these people's lives which is from heaven. They will all know me from the least of them to the greatest.

And one last thing here. Looking at the characteristics of the new covenant. It's here in chapter 8 verse 12.

I will forgive their sins. Sorry. I will forgive their wickedness. I will remember their sins no more. And the writer to the Hebrews seems to make a really big point of this.

[31:41] This is one of the things. Their sins are forgiven. This is one of the things. The people in the New Testament. Their sins are forgiven.

And if we just tease this out a bit. Their sins are forgiven because they need to be forgiven.

Because all these people are sinners. There's nobody in the New Testament.

In the New Covenant. Who says. Oh I never needed to be forgiven my sins. Because I've never committed any sins. Nobody says that. There's lots of people in the world outside.

Who say. Oh I don't need to be forgiven. Because I never committed any sins. But all the people on the inside. Say. Yeah. Sinner. That's me. That's me. And I do need forgiveness.

They're all sinners. And they all need their sins to be forgiven. One of the signs of being a Christian is baptism. We've got a Baptist pool here. For those who are not quite sure what these panels are.

[32:41] In the ground. That's what it's for. Yeah. I nearly went off on one there. And when you go into the water of baptism.

You're saying. I'm dirty. I need to be clean. It's a little bit like when you volunteer to have a shower. You know. Have a shower. Because I need a shower. And when you go into the water of baptism.

You're saying. I need to be cleaned. All the people in the New Testament are sinners. And need their sins to be forgiven. And we will need that every day until we get to glory.

And the New Testament declares this. I will forgive their sins. I will forgive their wickedness. And remember their sins no longer.

And in the New Testament. They're sinners. They need their sins to be forgiven. And God forgives their sins. And God forgives their sins. Which is great isn't it?

[33:39] As far as the east is from the west. So far has he removed our transgressions from us. Their wickedness. I will forgive. I will remember their sins.

No more. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Yes my sins are gone. Gone. I can't remember how it goes after that.

I shouldn't have started it. But that. Here's the wonder of it. My sin.

Oh the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin. Not in part. But the whole. Is nailed to his cross. And I bear it no more. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. And my soul. Wiped away. The vilest offender who truly believes. That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

[34:35] Our sins. Though they be red as scarlet. Shall be white as wool. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? We were reading at home the

story of the weeping lady.

Who when Jesus was having a meal. She. Forget the exact details. But she was weeping. And washing his feet. And drying his feet with her hair.

Something like that. And Jesus was invited to shush her away. Because she'd been a sinner. If this man was really a prophet.

He'd know what sort of woman this was. And he'd have nothing to do with her. And Jesus says. Shut up and leave her alone. Because. She loves me. And she loves much.

Because she's been forgiven much. She loves much. Because she's been forgiven much. And brothers and sisters. Here's the. Here's the thing about realizing that we're sinners.

[35:37] Realizing the vileness of our sin. And the foulness of our sin. Because when it's washed away. We're so grateful. Aren't we?

And the one who washes away our sin. We love him. And as Jesus said. He who's been forgiven little. Loves little. But he's been forgiven much.

Loves much. And I say. We need to love him much. We need to love him much. Loved much. Forgiven much. And so.

I'm going to stop now. We're thinking about the. The mangle. And the old washing machine. And the new. Extra powered. Super duper washing machine.

And I just. Make that. Just a little bit of a. Comparison. With the old covenant. Which. Was great. It really was.

[36:33] A great covenant. But. It didn't do. What it said on the tin. So now. There is a new covenant. Which does exactly.

What it says on the tin. Through Jesus Christ. We are brought near to God. Through Jesus Christ. We do know God. Through Jesus Christ. We are changed.

And through Jesus Christ. Our sins are forgiven. So that's. Sort of. A. I'd say. Hallelujah. Because that's. That's the privilege. We have. As New Testament Christians. And please.

Don't go back. To anything less. Please don't. Um. Settle for anything less. Uh. Who would go back. To the old. Type. Or. Anything similar. Who would go back.

To what is. Just external. Priests. And rituals. When we have. The real thing. And don't be satisfied. With anything less. Than real. New. Covenant.

[37:27] Christianity. And that's all about. Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. we're going to sing about the one who holds us fast and then we'll be finishing.