

Text: Heb 10.15-18

The long argument beginning in Heb 7.1 wraps up in our text today. Our next verse will take us to applications of the theology of Hebrews.

By application, I am thinking along the lines of “The old covenant is finished, what should we do about it?” or “The New Covenant is in force, how should I now live?”

Before we get to that, we have one final thing to say theologically:

Why the New Covenant Is Enough for Me

Certain events in life change your life forever. You may be going along on in life with various prospects ahead of you, then a decision is made, or an event outside your control happens, and the possibilities dry up. Your course of life is now set on a definite trajectory, there is no going back.

When I was 23, I graduated from University with my bachelor's degree and I came home to work for a semester and then go back in January for graduate school.

I was planning to sell real estate with my dad, make a ton of money, and get back to school with ease. I had a girlfriend, I had hopes, and way too much confidence.

The girl ditched me (how could she?) ...

The real estate market was about to crash (how could I know?) ...

In January 1980 I went back to school anyway. The effects of that decision shaped almost all the rest of my life.

- I found I had to work my way through grad school
- I met Debbi the fall of 1980
- Debbi and I got married after my second degree (one week later), one year later we had Duncan, and my life was set on its course — there was no going back to the other possibilities that existed in 1980.

The day I left home for grad school, I had bought a utility trailer, loaded all my stuff on it, and headed out on the wintry roads for South Carolina.

My dad told me that as he watched me drive away, he knew I wasn't coming back. My life changed forever.

We are talking about the New Covenant and its ramifications in Hebrews. After the New Covenant, there is no going back. The Old Covenant is over. The New Covenant is now in force. There is no way back to the old way.

Read Heb 10.15-18

Our author once again quotes Jer 31, where the New Covenant is prophesied.

Proposition: The Christian life is a New Covenant life. The old is past, the new has come.

I. The New Covenant is in the present tense (15)

The first verse just sets up the Jeremiah quotation, but it has one significant point: the present tense verb.

Heb 10.15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

“testifies” is *present tense*

- Usually, we emphasize continuous action with the present tense
- Today, we will emphasize the time aspect of the present tense

1. The word for “testify” is often translated “witness”

Peter, in Acts, “We are witnesses”

2. This use of the present tense occurs several times in Hebrews

Heb 5.6 just as He says also in another *passage*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

Heb 7.17 For it is attested *of Him*, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

Heb 3.7 ¶ Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

- In each case, the voice of the Scriptures is in present tense — it is speaking today
- The Bible is always speaking, if we hear it, the message is for us right now

“the Holy Spirit is speaking now, bringing the text from the past into the present.”¹

3. The Holy Spirit is speaking the words of Jeremiah *today* — to us
 - a. The words quoted here are the words of the New Covenant: The Spirit is speaking them to us
 - b. Even when we hear the rest of the words of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit’s voice is speaking of the New Covenant
 - c. We’ve crossed a watershed: the voice of God now speaks *only* of the New Covenant
 - 1) He informs us of the Old
 - 2) He preaches to us of the New

Proposition: The Christian life is a New Covenant life. The old is past, the new has come.

Thus, the new covenant is enough for me. This is how I relate to God, this way, and no other.

II. My sins are in the past tense (17-18)

I am going to break up the order of the text for the sake of my outline.

A. Passage structure

1. The quotation begins with “for after saying...”
2. Then we have a quotation of Jer 31.33, with a slight alteration from “Israel” (in Jeremiah) to “them” in Hebrews

This is probably to accommodate the message to Gentiles as well as Israelites.

3. Our text has “*he then says*” in italics
 - a. There is nothing in the Greek text for this
 - b. It is implied by

¹ David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 503.

- 1) the phrase “for after saying...” in v. 15
- 2) and by skipping down from Jer 31.33 to Jer 31.34b

For preaching purposes, I want to go to the third part of our passage before coming back to the second

B. Passage point: my sins are no longer held against me

1. The fact of my sins

- a. The universal message of the Bible speaks to man’s sin nature
- b. Romans 3 is one of the most complete Scriptural catalogs of human sinfulness

In Rm 3, Paul starts out:

Rm 3.9 ¶ ... we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

Then he quotes scripture after Scripture, beginning with Pss 14.1, 53.1:

Rm 3.10 as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Then follows Pss 14.2-3, 5.9, 10.7, Pr 1.16 and Isa 59.7, Isa 59.8, Ps 36.1, all of which bring us to Rm 3.23

Rm 3.23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- c. No need to belabor the point, but we all must acknowledge the fact of our sins

2. The focus of God’s mind

- a. Our passage is very emphatic: the famous Gk double negative

Heb 10.17 “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”

Lit. “I will not not remember any longer”

- b. God is omniscient, and forgets nothing: this means he chooses not to hold us to account for our sins in the New Covenant

3. The effect of forgiveness of sins

- a. God's not remembering is called "forgiveness" (Heb 10.18)
- b. The consequence (effect): no more any offering for sin

The fact that there are no more sacrifices assures us that *all* our sins are forgiven, we are not held to account for them (Jesus was)

Proposition: The Christian life is a New Covenant life. The old is past, the new has come.

The new covenant is enough for me. My sins are in the past (all my sins, even those that may come).

III. My prospects are in the future tense (16)

A. The future tenses in the verse speak of the future of the covenant

1. I will make a covenant
2. I will put my laws in their heart
3. I will write my laws in their mind

B. The future tense I am thinking about is my future tense

1. The new covenant, when it is in force, changes my inner man
 - a. The new covenant changes my heart

I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART

- b. The new covenant reorders my mind

ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM

2. Once my inner man is changed, my future is changed

- a. When I did not know God, I stood at a crossroads
 - 1) This is like the message of Proverbs to the naïve
 - a) Simple one, says Wisdom, turn in here
 - b) Simple one, says Folly, turn in here
 - 2) The lost person can turn to God, or follow his flesh and the devil

b. When I choose God (believe in Christ), I am changed

1) Heart

2) Mind

There is no going back to the old way

3. My future is a life with a new relationship to sin

a. I see sin with a new sight, I react to sin with a new heart

b. This change is the work of the Holy Spirit, implanting in my inner man a new way of thinking

c. Not only that, the Holy Spirit enables a new power to overcome my old man, the old sin that dwells in me

Conclusion:

Proposition: The Christian life is a New Covenant life. The old is past, the new has come.

David Allen says, "It is clear that the author considers the new covenant to be currently in force for Christians and not as beginning at some later date."²

Now that the New Covenant has come:

1. the law can do nothing for me (1-4)
2. the one sacrifice is better than the many (5-10)
3. the one priest is enough for me (11-14)
4. the new covenant is enough for me (15-18)

And there is this, too:

Your whole way of life needs constant re-evaluation by the Spirit and your renewed mind:

- Do you live more like the world, or more like a Christian?
- Do you value wealth more than serving God?
- Do you value power more than humble submission to God?
- Do you seek pleasure at the expense of suffering as a Christian?

The New Covenant is enough for me — Is it enough for you?

² Allen, *Hebrews*, 504.