

Only Jesus Transforms  
October 26, 2014  
Allen Power

Hebrews 8:1-13

- Opening discussion: Those who've never grasped the concept of God's saving grace, think the Christian life is about carefully following a set of rules.
- **Based on human nature, what is the problem with that idea?**
- Let's consider a very human illustration: It's amazing how someone can change when their heart gets involved! **How does behavior change when, for example, someone meets that love of their life? What about when that first child is born? Grandchildren?**
- As we said, it's amazing how someone can change when their heart gets involved!
- A change of heart can cause a change in behavior. That's a good start...but we're still human.
- So many people are trying to get to Heaven by keeping the rules, yet that's not human nature.
- The only way to Heaven is a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Relationship with Jesus is more than a CHANGE of heart...we need a NEW heart.
- Today's scripture shows us what that relationship looks like.

Hebrews 8:1–5 (ESV)

1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

- The first two verses transition from what we studied last week in chapter seven.
- **Verses one and two: What makes Jesus superior to the human priests of the past?**
- **Verse three: a high priest must offer "gifts and sacrifices." What did Jesus offer? (7:27)**
- The old priesthood was all these people had known. But the writer of Hebrews says this was a "copy" or "shadow" of "heavenly things." **What do you think he meant by that?**
- Verse six says Jesus didn't just start a new ministry...He ushered in a new covenant.

6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

- **What is a covenant? What is a mediator? How does Jesus play that role for us?**
- God made a several covenants with His people in Old Testament history.
- The primary divine covenants include those made with Noah (Gen. 9:9–17), Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 17:2), Moses (Exod. 19:5–6), David (2 Sam. 23:5; see 7:12–16), and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34.
- What the writer of Hebrews refers to as the "old covenant" is the covenant God made by giving Moses the ten commandments.

Exodus 19:5–6 (ESV) God speaking to the children of Israel...

5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

- You might ask, why did we need a new covenant? Beginning in verse seven, the writer of Hebrews answers that question by quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34.
- This is the longest Old Testament quote in the New Testament. 600 years before Jesus was born listen to what God said through Jeremiah about the need for a new covenant:

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

8 For he finds fault with them when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,  
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah,

9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers  
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant,  
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

- **Based on verses eight and nine, why didn't the old covenant between God and the people succeed? Was the covenant faulty?**
- Let me clarify something in verse nine. Verse nine does not say God has turned His back on the Jews as a people. **Who specifically was God showing some "tough love?"**
- So, Jesus brought us a new covenant with better promises...what are those promises?
- Verses 10-12 outline the four "better" promises of the new covenant.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel  
after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,  
and write them on their hearts,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor  
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’  
for they shall all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,  
and I will remember their sins no more.”

- **Let's do some observation. What are the four promises of the new covenant? Two of them in verse 10. Another in verse 11. The last one in verse 12.**
- God's first promise is to put his laws into the “minds” and “hearts” of His people.
- **How is this different compared to how the “old covenant” worked?**

Here's a similar scripture we studied a while back in Ezekiel:  
Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV)

26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

- Think about our old heart before Christ, compared to the new heart as a follower of Christ like the difference between a stone and a sponge.
- When I had a heart of stone, the things of God (His word; His commandments; His people) would just bounce right off that cold heart. Couldn't make a dent!
- Now, think of our NEW heart as a sponge that only soaks up the things of God.
- That new, soft heart is THIRSTY for God's word and God's love. It just SOAKS it up. Then when someone grabs that new heart what comes out? The love of God!
- If we don't SATURATE our heart with God's word and God's love, it becomes dry and empty just like a dry sponge. But, the good news: Start soaking and it softens right back up!

Larry Richards writes:

*The Law can tell us what the standards are. But only a changed heart will enable us to live by those standards. God now puts His laws in our minds and writes them in our hearts. It is through the Bible that we come to understand the will of God. And it is here we find the principles that show us how to live a righteous life. But it is only the transformed heart, which spontaneously responds to God and His Word, that will move us to righteousness.*

(Teachers Commentary)

- That's just promise number one. Also in verse ten, God said: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." **If you summed that up in one word what word would you use?**
- Read verse eleven again. **What does this promise mean?**
- **The fourth promise in verse twelve speaks of what?**
- **How can an all-knowing God not remember our sins any more?**
- This the true example of forgiveness. People say, "forgive and forget." **Is that possible?**
- This verse doesn't mean God has become absentminded about our sin.
- In an act of MERCY He CHOOSES to treat us as if we had never committed the sin.
- When we forgive someone as God has forgiven us, we don't forget what they did but we can choose not to hold it against them anymore.
- Another word for remember is recall. Meaning to call something back to memory.
- In other words, when we forgive we need stop bringing it back up. Don't get HISTORICAL!
- The new covenant gives me: A new heart! A personal relationship with God! A personal understanding of God! And FORGIVENESS for every sin I ever committed or ever will!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Being a follower of Christ in the NEW COVENANT is not about rules, it's about relationship.
- *"But, He expects me to be holy and obedient, right?"* He does...but God knows us so well that He gives believers in Christ a NEW HEART that INCLINES us to do His will.
- A change of heart won't cut it, we need a NEW HEART.
- *"I'm a follower of Christ but my heart seems dry."* Just start SATURATING it with the word of God and the things of God and soon it will be dripping with the love of God.
- And if by chance you still have a heart of stone. He's ready to exchange it for that NEW heart.