

Better Part 2

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

Someone once said, "Build a better mousetrap and the world will knock on your door." Every industry lives by this principle, whether mousetraps, computers, cars, clothes, televisions, music. It doesn't matter; everyone tries to improve on everything. That causes us all kinds of disappointment. As soon as we purchase our latest television, we see an advertisement for one that is flatter, brighter and cheaper. We kick ourselves each time and wish there would be some item that would become the best in its class and never have any improvement. According to **Hebrews**, that is exactly what we have in our covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are in not only a better covenant, but the best covenant. Out of all the covenants God made throughout history and out of all the covenants men have made up, the covenant with Jesus is better (**Hebrews 7:22; 8:6**).

In our last lesson, we learned that a covenant is a solemn and binding agreement through which God offers promises to His subjects in exchange for our submission to His conditions. We also learned that the covenant with God through Jesus is better because it was given through a better revelation (**Hebrews 1:1-4**), provides a better hope (**Hebrews 7:19**) and offers better promises (**Hebrews 8:6**). That, however, is not all.

Discussion:

- I. Ratified by a better sacrifice
 - A. According to **Hebrews 9:18-22**, when God instituted the covenant with Israel, Moses sacrificed calves and goats to sanctify the people and their tabernacle. However, according to **Hebrews 9:23-26**, our covenant has a better sacrifice.
 - B. Our sacrifice is better because it actually provides forgiveness. **Hebrews 10:1-4** explains that despite the overwhelming number of sacrifices offered under the Old Law, none of them provided redemption and actual forgiveness. The most they really accomplished was the reminder that people were sinful and needed a real sacrifice. Then Jesus came. His sacrifice actually worked according to **Hebrews 9:11-14**.
 - C. Further, when Jesus our High Priest sacrificed Himself, it was not to sanctify a shadow of a tabernacle. He did not go into the Holy place made with hands, but into the true Holy of Holies in heaven (**Hebrews 9:24**). He did this on our behalf and secured our eternal redemption. In the Old Covenant, the atonement sacrifice allowed the High Priest alone to go into the Holy Place. However, because of our better sacrifice, not only did our High Priest go into God's presence on our behalf, we are able to come into God's presence (**Hebrews 10:19-22**).
 - D. No longer do we have to approach God through our own feeble sacrifices. No longer do we have to approach God through another man. We are now, by the blood of Christ allowed to come into God's presence all on our own. What a better covenant.
- II. Gives a better possession
 - A. According to **Hebrews 10:34**, because we are in a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we have better possessions. The Christians here were able to accept the plunder of their material property because they knew they had something better. This is not a statement of comparison regarding the Old Covenant with the new. It is a statement of comparison between materialism and Christ's covenant.
 - B. So many people today waste their lives in the pursuit of material goods. We can't even keep up with the technology. There is always something newer and faster. Once we have our goods, we spend our time trying to protect those goods. Because these people were Christians, they suffered loss. Some lost jobs because they couldn't be a Christian and do their work. Some lost jobs because of persecution. Some were arrested and had their homes taken. But they accepted this joyfully because they had a better possession.
 - C. **Hebrews 13:5-6** states that better possession. We can be content with what we have, not because our material possessions are good enough. We can be content because we have God. He will never leave us. He will never forsake us. He will be with us. Though we are destitute

because our possessions have been plundered, though thieves break in and steal, though moths eat and rust destroys, we have God. God will carry us through.

- D. Please notice something in this passage. Too often today, if we have struggles with our possessions, we think that means God is not with us. If our income doesn't allow us to purchase the possessions we want, if thieves steal our possessions, if the stock market crashes and destroys our ability to have possessions in the future, if fire wipes out our possessions or whatever might happen, many of us begin thinking God is not with us. These Christians recognized their relationship with God was not dependent upon their possessions. In fact, they were able to deal with loss of possession because they had God. We need to learn to stick with God, pursuing His kingdom and righteousness no matter what—job or no job, family or no family, possessions or no possession. We don't have a relationship with God to have a better job, to keep our family or have great possessions. We have a relationship with God because that is where true comfort and peace are and because that is where heaven is in the end. Many modern covenants try to offer health and wealth, but we have a better possession in our covenant. We have God.

III. Leads us to a better country

- A. Our covenant leads us to a better country (**Hebrews 11:16**). Like our last point, this “better” is not a comparison with the other covenants God had with His people. This is a contrast between being in covenant with God and with the materialism of this world. Too many people today are wrapped up in this world. We are at home here in the world. But God's covenant is offering us a better country, a heavenly one. As **Colossians 3:2** says, we should not be distracted by the things down here, but focus on the things of heaven. That is the better country.
- B. According to **Philippians 3:20**, as members of Christ's covenant, our citizenship is in heaven. Think for a moment about the import of that. Sadly, too many churches today are making their mission to influence politics. When “important moral” votes come up, they run rallies and put out political statements and advise voting policy. It has been my experience that some of the “religious right” seem more interested in getting to Washington than getting to heaven. I'm not saying you may not be political. Feel free to vote. Vote your conscience and your convictions. But do not think our covenant relationship is remotely dependent upon those votes. America may uphold biblical values and they may not, but we are first and foremost Christians. God has not put us here so we can vote a Christian ballot. He has put us here so we can live godly lives, serve others and shine God's light on the world through our lives, not our politics. America is a great county, among earthly countries. But heaven is a better country. Why on earth would any of us put our eggs in America's basket? Heaven is the country that claims our citizenship. Heaven is our country. What a better country it is.

IV. Offers a better life

- A. According to **Hebrews 11:35**, submitting to God provides a better life. However, this is not the better life so many talk about. It is true if you live the life of a Christian, you can avoid many of the heartaches and troubles non-Christians face. When we submit to Christ, we have better family lives, work lives, relationships, health. There are numerous ways in which truly surrendering to God's will for our lives makes it better. But that is not what the Hebrew writer is talking about. He is talking about life in the resurrection.
- B. According to **I Peter 1:3-5**, we are looking forward to an inheritance in heaven. How many people look forward to the death of some long lost relative who leaves them an inheritance that puts their life on easy street. That is nothing compared to the great life we have in our inheritance from God after this life is over.
- C. But the greatness of that life isn't about material comfort or just the joys of heaven. According to **II Peter 3:13**, we are waiting for a new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells. Think about the better life we have to look forward to. True, there is no sickness, no death, no poverty, no hunger, no want. But more importantly, there is no sin, no temptation, no unrighteousness, no persecution, no trials, no tribulations. The saints in **Hebrews 11:35** were willing to be put to death to serve the Lord because they knew it was a deliverance from worse to better. That is the promise of God for us in our covenant through Jesus Christ.

- D. This tells us something about Christianity compared to some of the other world religions. Many religions don't promise a better life. They just promise this one over and over again. They teach reincarnation. They don't look forward to a heavens and earth where righteousness dwell; they look forward to this earth again and again and again. We can face death with our heads held high, because we know our covenant provides a better life when this one is over. What a better covenant it is.
- V. Sheds blood that says better things
- A. According to **Hebrews 12:24**, the sacrifice of Jesus in our covenant sheds blood that says better things than the blood of Abel. In **Genesis 4:10**, God said Abel's blood was crying out to Him from the ground. Though the specific words are not stated, the context says that the cry was one of accusation and condemnation against Cain. Cain had killed his brother and the blood of his victim screamed its accusation from the ground whose mouth had opened to drink the blood of Abel.
- B. The blood of Jesus, whom we killed, cries out to God as well. But it says better things. Instead of shouting out the accusation and condemnation that we deserve. It cries out forgiveness. As Jesus cried on the cross, "Father, forgive them" (**Luke 23:34**) on behalf of those at the foot of His cross, so does His blood cry out for those of us now who go to the foot of His cross and surrender our lives to Him (**Matthew 26:28**).
- C. This is what truly makes our covenant the best. As **Acts 4:12** says, there is salvation in no other. The reason is only the blood of Jesus provides the sacrifice that sanctifies, setting us apart from the world and granting us access to the presence of God (**Hebrews 10:19**). What more could we possibly want? The fact is nothing else offers any more. Nothing else offers as much. The blood of Jesus speaks on our behalf, justifying us and declaring us innocent, presenting us holy and blameless to God (**Colossians 1:19-22**).

Conclusion:

Christianity didn't build a better mousetrap. It doesn't offer a better computer. But it has offered a better covenant, providing us a better hope, giving us better promises, ratified by a better sacrifice, leading us to a better country and promising us a better life. All of this is true because the blood of Jesus speaks of our forgiveness. It doesn't get any better than this. There is no Christianity 2.1, XP or Vista. This is not a Beta version submitted for testing so we can get something better down the road. No, the covenant with God through Jesus Christ is as good as it could possibly be. Are you part of it? God has promised you adoption, redemption, sanctification, glory and eternity in heaven. He has asked you to surrender your life to Him. It is that very surrender that allows you the righteousness you have wanted for so long, setting you free from sin and Satan. Surrender you life to God today, enter His covenant by sharing in the sacrifice of Jesus. **Colossians 2:9-15** says we take part in Jesus' death and burial through baptism. In baptism we are buried with Jesus and then raised to new life by the powerful working of God. Our trespasses are forgiven, the curse of the Old Law's debt is removed and the power of Satan is crushed from our lives. Are you in Christ's covenant?