



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Papa's Got a Brand-New Bag

Hebrews 8:1–13

Tim Badal | January 24, 2021

In 1965, music changed. With one song and one artist, music would never be the same again. That was the year when James Brown entered the music world. Now, for our older generation, you know who James Brown was. How many remember him? In the first service a teenager told me, "Yeah, I didn't know him, but he was in Rocky IV." Yes, James Brown is the guy who sings before the real big fight between Apollo Creed and Dolph Lundgren. But for the most part, the younger generation doesn't know the great style and great music James Brown brought. So I thought you might need a little wake-me-up this morning. [Plays excerpt from "Papa's Got a Brand-New Bag."]



In 1965, he introduced the world to funk. He said, "It ain't no drag—Papa's got a brand-new bag." With a focus on the downbeat and a new kind of rhythm and blues, James Brown brought a new style of music to the world. Brown tells the story through the lyrics in that song about an old man who was about to come onto the dance floor. He was going to push away all his traditions, all the old way of doing things, and he was going to "cut a rug" in a new way. The song also told a broader story. An article written about the song said it wasn't just about music. James Brown wanted to introduce people to a new way of life, rather than being stuck in the old. In the process of doing this, as scary, difficult and awkward as it may feel at first, there would be great joy and opportunity when we cast off the old and put on the new.

Why in the world would Pastor Tim bring in James Brown on a Sunday morning? It's because Hebrews is written as a reminder to the people that the old is gone and the new has come. He was writing to a group of Jewish believers who had given up the law of Moses, who had left all the rituals and regulations the Old Testament law had, and who had now come to something new. They had found Jesus. In finding Jesus, they had experienced a new way of living life. But here's the problem. Just as happens when someone introduces a new style of music, there will be people from the old way who will say, "You can't do it that way."

These new Jewish believers, who had fallen in love with Jesus and who were experiencing this "new bag" God had revealed in Jesus, began to get pushback. They started being persecuted for loving Jesus. They were being tempted to give up on the new thing God had done and go back to the old stodgy way of living under the rules and regulations of the law. The writer of Hebrews has said over and over again that to give up on this new thing that's found in the person and work of Jesus would be the most foolish thing any Christ-follower could do. From chapter one, verse one, he has told us that Jesus is better than anything offered us by the Old Testament law. Jesus is better than the patriarchs. Jesus is better than the angels. He's better than the prophets. Jesus is better than the high priests of Aaron's priesthood. Jesus is better again and again and again.

What we learned in Hebrews 7 is that Jesus is the great High Priest forever. He's the first, the last and everything when it comes to the office of High Priest. Hebrews 7:12 tells us that with the new High Priest comes a new law. Jesus, the great High Priest, is going to usher His people into a new contract, a new covenant. Just as the law did, Jesus brings a contract between God and man.

But He does what the law could not do—He would bring God and man together forever. There would be nothing that can separate us from God and from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Hebrew 8 then is all about this new thing—this "new bag"—that God has given us which we call the new covenant.

What the author wrote in Hebrews 8:1 is essentially the thesis statement for the entire book: *"Now the point in what we are saying is this..."* This is an important Sunday for you to be here, because in this message, you're going to hear the gist of the book of Hebrews.

Because Jesus has come, you and I have unfettered access to God. No longer do we need to worry about our sin. But that was not always the case. For hundreds of years, the people of God lived under the law. What did that look like? What was that all about? To understand what we have in the new covenant, we have to look back at the old covenant. The law of Moses was instituted on Mt. Sinai and is found in the first five books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. There we find 613 laws for the people of God to follow. These laws involved how they were to worship God, how they were to interact with God and how they were to interact with one another, both in public life and private life. They involved family relationships, commerce relationships and every element of life. They even address how the people were to relate to strangers and foreigners.

These 613 laws had a purpose. They weren't just there to be there. It's helpful for us to remember this purpose. The Jewish people needed the law for three reasons.

1. First, it gave them a glimpse into God's holiness. These laws showed them all the things they would need to do if they wanted to be holy like God.
2. Second, the laws served to restrain sin. These 613 rules kept the people from doing what God said they ought not to do. For example, the law includes the command, "Do not steal." Besides just a person's desire to obey God, there was also built into the law specific punishments if it was broken. If you stole something, certain things would happen to you. That meant you would think twice before stealing. You would also think twice before bearing false witness about someone. You would think twice before you treated God in a casual way. All of these laws came with a punishment, thus they would curtail people's outward sinfulness.
3. Third, they would bring temporal forgiveness for sin. Every year you would bring an offering, telling the priest you broke one or two or 613 of the laws. You knew you couldn't stand in the presence of God. You knew your family or your crops or your nation or your own life would not be blessed by God until there was a sacrifice made. On the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the people brought offerings to the Lord to cover their sin for the entire year, but they would have to do this again and again and again. It was a perpetual process of getting back to square one. Rather than freely enjoying fellowship with God, they had to sit under the rules and regulations of the law.

In these three ways the law accomplished its purpose. Yet we read in Hebrews that the law is actually powerless. It cannot accomplish everything we need. In Hebrews 7:19 we read, *"The law made nothing perfect..."* We need to be made perfect, but the law can't do it. The law was called weak because it lacks the power to make us right with God. In fact, in many ways the law keeps us at arm's length from the holy God. It cannot save us from our sins.

So the purpose of the law led to the powerlessness of the law, which then led to a perversion of the law, especially during the days of Jesus. All of His arguments with the chief priests and religious leaders had to do with the ways they had perverted the original laws in ways that were unhelpful for the people of God. Essentially these religious leaders were telling the people that the way they would get to God was by getting all the laws right. And it wasn't just the original laws; the leaders had added thousands of other laws. This was why the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14 could stand up and say, "I'm grateful I'm not like all these other people." He had no grace or mercy, but considered himself to be more holy than the rest.

That's what legalism does. It encourages people to compare themselves with other people. "I'm sure glad I'm not like him. I'm sure glad I'm better than her." On the other hand, it discourages people who think they can never be as holy as the leaders. "I'm not like them." It creates bondage.

Jesus called the Pharisees "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:27-28). They were clean on the outside because the law was always external. As long as a person looked good, then the perversion of the law led them to believe they were fine. The problem was these leaders had made the law everything. In John 5:39, Jesus told them, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life."* That's the perversion.

You might be thinking, "I'm not Jewish. I don't live under those laws." Do you know what? We create our own laws and rules; our own rules and regulations. We believe if we follow these, we will gain eternal life. Every major religion outside of Christianity is about you attaining eternal life on your own. There is nothing new under the sun. The perversion is the idea that we can get to God on our own.

But John tells us in John 5:39 that the law was written to reveal to us our inner selves. The prophets had pointed to this. In fact, all the Old Testament Scriptures carry this message. The writer of Hebrews will quote Jeremiah 31 in our text this morning. Essentially the message is that God has always intended to provide His people with a new covenant. God had a brand-new bag, which involved Jesus Christ being our High Priest forever. That is the gist of Hebrews.

Let's look now at Hebrews 8:1-7:

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, ²a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They 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." ⁶But 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. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

In Christ, God replaced that which was...

In Hebrews 8, the writer will tell us that because Jesus is the new High Priest, the new contract by which He brings men to God is far better than the old way. He does this in four ways.

...Inferior with the superior.

We'll start at the end and move backwards. The reason Jesus came was because the old law would never take care of the people's sin problem. It was inferior. How was it inferior? Its inferiority came because of the high priest who mediated it. So what makes Jesus better? Jesus is superior because He sits in a **superior seat**. Verse one tells us He "*...is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.*" This was a place of honor and authority. When the Old Testament priests went in to the Holy of Holies, they never sat down. Why? Because they had work to do. They went in, did what they were told to do, then left. Because Jesus is the perfect and sinless High Priest and because His work of redemption has already been completed, He is able to sit down in the place of greatest honor. No high priest could ever sit down in the Holy of Holies, let alone sit at the right hand of the Father's throne in heaven. So Jesus has the superior seat.

Also, we see that Jesus has a **superior sanctuary**. Verse two tells us that Jesus resides in a "true tent." What does that mean? The Jewish people would have understood this. For many years, from Moses to David, the people of God worshiped the presence of God in a tent. As we read in verse five, God gave Moses very specific instructions on how this tent should be built. Nevertheless, the tent was made by human hands. Jesus was not made. He is God and is the presence of God Himself; the deity of God in bodily form. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. The sanctuary where Jesus dwells is the abode of God. It's not a copy or shadow or man-made representation of heaven. He is everything God intended the true tent to be.

Finally, Jesus is superior because He has a **superior service**. In verses two and three, we read how the priests were to serve. But Jesus is superior because He no longer has to do things over and over again.

Years ago my mom and dad owned a grocery store. Toward the end of those years I was in my early teens, so I was given the job of mopping the floor. Especially in the wintertime, the floor had to be mopped even when the store was open. So even while I was mopping, people would come in and track up the floor. It was the worst job in the world. As soon as I got an area clean, it got dirty again.

That's what happened under the old law. As soon as the people became clean, they began getting dirty again. But not so with Jesus. Every year the high priest had to seek forgiveness, but as soon as he was done with that process, it needed to be done again. The people never stopped sinning. But we read in Hebrews 7:27 that Jesus Christ saved us once and for all. He cleaned the floor and no one ever dirtied it again. Once He cleanses us, our hearts and minds will never be contaminated by sin again. Rather,

He continually intercedes on our behalf, so that those in whom He has begun a good work will have that work come to completion (Philippians 1:6).

So Jesus has the superior seat, He has the superior sanctuary and He has the superior service. That's what makes Him superior to the law of Moses.

...External with the internal.

The second thing God does is that in Christ, He replaces the external with the internal. All of the 613 laws had to do with things the people weren't supposed to do. These were physical activities they were forbidden, such as don't speak wrongly, don't use your body in a wrong way, don't physically harm people, don't physically take things from people. But what the law could not address was what was going on in the minds and hearts of people.

One of the most impressive passages in Scripture is Matthew 5:7. Jesus was giving His Sermon on the Mount and point by point He was saying, "You've heard it said...but I say." The law said, "Do not commit adultery." The people would have agreed. Then Jesus added, "But I tell you..." This was the new covenant. It wasn't just committing adultery in the physical act; if a man or woman looks at another individual in a lustful way, they have committed adultery in their hearts (Matthew 5:27-28). "Do not commit murder," He said. That was the external command. "But I tell you... Here's the new covenant, the internal law. If you think murderous thoughts about your brother or sister, you've committed murder in your heart" (Matthew 5:21-22).

Do you see how God was merging the external and the internal in Christ? This was a bigger deal. It was more holistic. Jesus is reminding us as Gentiles that we too can't just go through the motions. Some of you are the righteous-looking people who are rotten to the core. I'm probably not in that group, because my sins are usually outwardly visible.

One of the things I've loved about my wife is that she was a rule-follower before she came to know Christ. She was moral and did everything by the book. I had to remind her that the Bible says just because we get everything done right outwardly, it doesn't mean we still don't have inner issues. I would call myself a Romans 1 sinner. You'll see a lot of rebellion and other outward sins. But we can miss what it says in Romans 2, which was written to those of you who might think you're better than the "outward" sinners. "I don't do those things. You'll never see me do anything like that." But you're thinking it or you're desiring it in your heart. That's where Jesus condemned the Pharisees. He told them, "You look so good on the outside, but you're dead inside." This is the difference between the old covenant and the new. We need to realize that God demands our full allegiance, not only in word and deed, but also in thought and intention. All of it.

Later in our text the writer will explain the reason why we're now held accountable for our inward thoughts and attitudes. It's because God is able to exchange our hearts, giving us a new heart. Quoting from Jeremiah 31, he says the following in Hebrews 8:8-12:

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.

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.

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

Jesus says, “It’s a heart issue.” The new covenant isn’t just outward conformity—it’s heart change.

...Conditional with the unconditional.

The third difference is that in this new covenant, God replaces that which was conditional with the unconditional. The old covenant was contingent on the response of the people. After Moses gave the 613 laws to the people of Israel, he finished the Torah by saying, “These are the laws. If you do everything God tells you, you will be blessed. But if you don’t, you will be cursed.” We read in Deuteronomy 23:1–2:

And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

There was a catch, a caveat, a proviso in the old covenant. The blessings would only come if the people would live out their end of the bargain.

Today is a very important day for the Badal family. Our second son, Joshua, has his driving permit. When you leave church today, I recommend you get out of the parking lot quickly; we’re going to need the road to ourselves. We have a contract with Josh. Parents, you know what I’m talking about. Basically, Josh’s goal is a driver’s license. He wants to be able to listen to his own music and drive without Mom or Dad in the car. Under the contract, Josh has less than a year during which he needs to do a number of specific things and do them well. Then—and only then—will he receive the blessing of a driver’s license.

Yesterday after Josh got his permit, he and his older brother were headed to play basketball. That’s when it dawned on me that there might be a temptation for the older brother to offer to be Josh’s instructor. My answer to that idea was, “No. If that happens, you’re both dead.” That’s how, under the new covenant, you bring back the old covenant. A stoning would take place.

Seriously, there were conditions and requirements in the old covenant for Israel. And if you know Old Testament history, the people did not hold up their end of the bargain. So as we read in Hebrews 8:9, God “*showed no concern for them.*” They were left out and did not get the blessing they could have had. It wasn’t because God wasn’t faithful, but because they were unfaithful.

Here’s the crazy thing about the new covenant, brothers and sisters. Never forget this. It has nothing to do with you and me. Jesus saved us and demonstrated His love for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:6-8). There were no “ifs, ands or buts” to the gospel call of Jesus. He says, “Come all who are weary, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:25-30).

So then, what happens when we sin? He saves us. What happens when we fall? He picks us up. What happens when something bad takes place? He takes care of us. Instead of saying, “I’ll have no concern for them,” He says, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). So take heart. Find peace and solace in the truth that you cannot be separated from the love of God, no matter what you do. That is the new covenant.

...Outgoing with the ongoing.

Finally we see that the new covenant takes away that which is outgoing and replaces it with something that is ongoing. Notice verse 13: “*In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*” The old covenant was on its last leg.

Again, I’m going to bring my children into this for a moment. I think this will be helpful. We’ve got Josh, who’s 15, in a new journey with driving. I’ve also got 18-year-old Noah who is six months away from heading off to college. We were having a conversation yesterday. “Noah, we’re in this phase where I’ve got to stop being a dad to a little kid and I have to move to being a dad of an adult.” That’s hard to do, parents, amen? I was so appreciative of how Noah asked questions about what that would be like. Over the next three or four years, our oversight will become less and less. The rules are going to be fewer. Noah will begin to enter into a season of autonomy where he will have to make his own decisions. My fathering is growing more and more obsolete. The relationship between us will change, as it should for all parents at this stage of life. At some point we stop being over our kids and we start walking alongside them. This is important.

What God did in the old law is He stood over His people. But this is why Philippians 2 is so important. It says Jesus humbled Himself, put on flesh and made His dwelling among us. Without giving up any of His majesty or authority, Jesus went from being over us to walking alongside us. He modeled what it means to be a perfect human.

As the writer of Hebrews tells us, Jesus became our brother. Now He walks beside us and now we're in a relationship that is not top down, but side by side. That's why the hymn writer says, "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own." That's not an overbearing God with rules and regulations; that is a loving and merciful Friend who comes alongside us. We are now able to say with all our hearts and minds, "What a friend we have in Jesus."

Now, don't get me wrong. Some of you are thinking, "He's still God." Yes, He is. But that's the great way God reveals Himself in Jesus. The old way of God relating to His people is growing obsolete in two ways. One is historical. The book of Hebrews was written somewhere between 60 and 66 A.D. Why does that matter?

It matters because in 70 A.D., Rome decided they were done with all the uprisings that had taken place in Israel. They came into Jerusalem and destroyed it. Jesus talked about how this would happen in Matthew 25, telling His disciples that one stone of the temple would not be left on top of another. With the destruction of the temple, all the worship and sacrifices of the old covenant were gone.

The new covenant is...

So for the last 1900 years or so, there have been no sacrifices for sin made under the old covenant. This means the writer of Hebrews, when he speaks of the old law becoming obsolete, was prophesying something that would happen in less than a decade. Yet more important than not being able to make the sacrifices, those who lived under the new covenant had no need to shed any more animal blood. When Jesus shed His blood on Calvary's cross, that was done once and for all.

...A relationship involving communion with Jesus.

What do we do with all this? We're not Jews; we're Gentiles. We've never lived under the 613 rules. But the new covenant is all about a relationship that involves communion with Jesus Christ. For those of us who are Christ-followers and who are under this new covenant, this should cause us to fall in love with Jesus all the more. Think of what life would be like if all we had was rules and regulations, most of which we could never obey, and always knowing we could never get ahead in our spiritual life. That's not the case with Jesus. He once and for all took care of our sins, and now the only thing we have to worry about isn't being righteous, but having an ongoing relationship of communion with God.

That's why on the night Jesus was betrayed He took the cup and said, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me*" (Luke 22:14-23) Paul adds, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). Every time we come to the communion table and drink this juice, we're saying, "We are recipients of the new covenant that allows us to be in communion with Jesus each and every day."

Maybe there's someone today who has never entered into that relationship. You don't have to fix yourself to come to Jesus; He says, "Come as you are." So if you're thinking, "I don't know what this new covenant relationship is about. I don't know what it means to have a relationship with Jesus," tell Jesus in a simple prayer, "Jesus, I'm a sinner. I need Your grace. Come and commune with me."

It's not the words, but it's the heart that says, "Jesus, apart from You, I can't do it." Jesus says He will save you, change you and remember your sins no more (Hebrews 8:12, 10:17). It's about communion.

...Reflected through the great commandment.

So how do we show this new covenant to the world? The new covenant is reflected through the great commandment. So there was the old way with 613 laws that had to be lived and obeyed, or else. The new covenant doesn't give us a list of do's and don'ts. It says one thing: love. In Romans 13:10, Paul says, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*"

Well, who are we to love? What are we to love? Jesus told us, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Mark 12:30-31). We're called to love our God with everything we are.

So let me ask you this morning, "Are you loving God with all of your being? If not, have you allowed this great new covenant to fall on your deaf ears and stony heart?" Repent of this and tell Him, "Lord, I want to live this out." How do we do this? We show the world we are followers of Jesus Christ by loving our neighbors.

"But they don't like the things I like." Love them. "They don't live the way I do." Love them. "We argue back and forth." Love them. "They're not followers of Jesus." Love them. "They're antithetical to the things of Jesus." Love them. "They're enemies of Jesus—and mine." Love them. Love, love, love.

Now, the Bible is clear that we must speak the truth in love. We speak the gospel in love. Our hearts should reflect the reality that because we've experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus in this new covenant, we will now go about our lives—whether at work or at play—by loving the Lord God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Do you know what Jesus says? All of the law and all of the prophets hinge on those two commands (Matthew 22:36-40).

So listen, church. We went from 613 rules and regulations to two. As Gentiles, we can think the Israelite people were stiff-necked and rebellious, but remember, they were struggling with 613 rules. Can we just agree that we only struggle with two? We've got some work to do because God is calling us to love. That's the new covenant, that's why it's better than the old and that's why we should be telling the world about it. It is so much better than what it was before.

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