



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Good Shepherd Church - September 18, 2011

Sermon Title: When You Don't Measure Up

Sermon Text: Hebrews 8.7-13  
Related Texts: Romans 3.19-28; Ephesians 2.1-10

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Have you ever been in a situation in which your "best was just not good enough?" What did you learn from that experience?

## II. Introduction

Here's a brief overview of what we have seen in Hebrews so far:

Hebrews 1 and 2 Jesus the Messiah is the complete revelation of God's character and authority and he is superior to angels who gave the law to Moses

Hebrews 3 and 4 God's promise of a true Sabbath rest - through Jesus the Messiah

Hebrews 5 - 8 God has established a new and better covenant foretold by Jeremiah and mediated through Jesus the great High Priest

And the writer of Hebrews continues to encourage these weary Christians reminding them that since God has established this new and better covenant, to go back to the old is foolish and disloyal. It's the nature and efficacy of this new covenant that takes the forefront this week. What makes it superior and why is it so important, especially when you don't measure up?

## III. Study the Text – Read Hebrews 8.7-13

- 1) In verses 7 and 8 the author uses the Greek word "memptos" once in reference to the Law of Moses ("if there was nothing wrong") and once referring to the people of Israel and their failure to keep the Law. As a result, "God found fault" with them. Look at Exodus 24.7-8. What promise did the people make? Did they keep their promise?
- 2) Verses 7 and 8 cite two important things. One is that the Law was not effectual. The second is that the people fell short. As you re-read verses 8 - 12 what remedy does God promise?

Note: God's initial covenant promises were extended to Abraham - the promise of a multitude of descendants, a land to live in, a relationship with God, experiencing the blessing of knowing God, and being a blessing to all the nations of the world. Later the covenant was activated between God and the people of Israel (descendants of Abraham) through Moses and while this nation was moving through the wilderness near Mt. Sinai. The means of living in this covenant relationship was adherence to the Law of Moses. Like a rope held by two parties, God held the rope and the people promised to hold their end of that rope. Unfortunately the people grew tired and let go of the rope. They experienced the shame and frustration of not measuring up to the Law's demands. They

failed to keep their end of the agreement. And, the Law - the means of this older covenant relationship - was ineffective in empowering and enabling the people to obey God's Law. Still, though the people let go of their end of the rope, God help onto the rope and offered a new covenant.

- 3) How, according to verses 10 - 12 will the new covenant being promised by Jeremiah differ from the old one?
- 4) Verse 10 refers to human minds and hearts. What does that suggest about the new covenant? In what ways is it an inward reality as opposed to adherence to external rules? What difference do you think this makes?
- 5) Verse 11 emphasizes the experience of knowing God personally. What is significant about this aspect of the new covenant?
- 6) Verse 12 cites that the new covenant is based on mercy and forgiveness. How does this differ from old covenant's curse of condemnation and not measuring up or being worthy?
- 7) Take a look at Romans 3.19-28. Paul argues that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (verse 23). The attempt to keep the old covenant Law only results in a keen awareness of how far short of God's moral perfection we do fall. How does Paul describe the amazingly wonderful solution of the new covenant centered in Jesus (verses 24-26)? "Justified" (verse 24) means to be acquitted and placed in a right standing with God. When you realize that you do not measure up to God's perfection what hope does this give you?

#### IV. Theological Reflection

Human nature seems to struggle against rules and prohibitions. The speed limit is 55, we want to go 65. God says "don't do this..." and we seem to be all the more desperate to do what is prohibited. That's why the Law was insufficient. It had no means of enabling human beings to do what it called for. The result was a curse of condemnation, frustration, and the shame that comes with not measuring up. Thanks be to God who has provided a new covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. And with that provision came the power of God's Holy Spirit who enables us to know and obey and give ourselves fully to God.

#### V. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

- 1) "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We fail. We don't measure up. We sin, we deliberately grieve God's heart and hurt others. Are there things you need to acknowledge to God, ask forgiveness for, and turn away from? What happens inside you when you say to God, "Thank you for forgiving and forgetting my sin?"
- 2) Are there broken relationships you need to attempt to reconcile? Are there people whom you need to ask for forgiveness? Are there others you need to forgive?
- 3) Look at Ephesians 2.1-10. How does this passage encourage you, especially when you feel that you don't measure up to God's standards? What good works do you think God is asking you to engage in?