

Growing in the Grace of God #19 - New Covenant Obedience Part 1

by Bob Hoekstra

The new covenant offers a better hope for obedience than relying on our own strength and promises to God.

Duration: 52:17

Scripture: Exodus 24:7, Acts 7:51, Galatians 4:21

Topics: "New Covenant", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of perfection and the desire to see growth in certain areas of our lives while diminishing others. He also highlights the issue of religious hype mentality, comparing it to the story of Israel and their inability to keep their pledge to obey God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of relying on God's ability to keep his promises, such as putting his spirit in us and writing his law in our hearts. The sermon concludes with a reference to Stephen's courageous sermon in Acts 7:51, where he addresses the leaders of Israel and criticizes their stubbornness and resistance to God's word.

Transcript

Lord, we come with overflowing thanksgiving to you. You're so good, so great, so faithful. Lord, we love you and we know more and more it's because you first loved us.

We thank you for your immeasurable grace. And as we've been learning, not only grace that forgives and gives new life, but grace that transforms and develops that life. We ask you now tonight, Lord, as we come to this great issue of obedience, let us see it through the eyes of the Spirit and the great role that the grace of God is to play in bringing obedience into our lives.

We just call upon your name for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit, Lord, upon our hearts and minds. Pray your word to go forth with an anointing that only you could give, Lord, that it not be man's words or thoughts, but as it were, the very oracles of God. We ask, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Study number 10. New covenant obedience.

New covenant obedience. An important question in growing in the grace of God. How does obedience relate to the new covenant? The new covenant being the arrangement between God and his children as to

how we know him, grow in him and walk with him, and that's his grace applied to our lives.

How does obedience relate to the new covenant? Is obedience merely a matter of just, you know, being Christian Nikes, I guess, you know, just do it. Just do it. Is that all that's involved in obedience where some just are able to do it or others can't or some will and some won't? Or is there more to it? Well, we want to be those who do it if God says it.

But where does the resource, the dynamic, the power to do it, that is walk in the will of God come from? In the new covenant, obedience will again hinge on, as everything does in the life of the new covenant of the grace of God, it will hinge on the difference between law and grace. Remember this verse? We've read this a few times. Romans 6 14.

Then we'll jump into Deuteronomy as listed. Romans 6 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Sin, a life of disobedience. We don't want to be under the domination of sin. We don't want sin controlling us, dominating us.

We want to be out from under the dominion of sin. We want to walk pleasing to the Lord. We want to walk in obedience.

Well, here's the reason we can anticipate, the hope we have that sin doesn't have to dominate us, and it's that we are not under law but under grace. See, if the only thing involved in obedience is just hear the command, give your best shot at it, and that's your best hope in obedience. The reason that's not a big enough hope is because that would leave us under the law.

The law is all about God's perfect will and man's own resource to live up to it. But we're not under law. Now again, we don't jettison law, remember that.

Just because the law can't make us holy, even though it demands holiness, just because the law can't make us perfect, Hebrews 7 18 and 19, even though it demands perfection, as summarized in Matthew 5 48, Jesus said, therefore be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. The law demands that we be as perfect as God. Nothing less.

Not be better, try harder, be improving, measure yourself with others. The standard is God himself. Don't forget that's what we are called to obey.

A law that says be as holy as God as perfect as the Heavenly Father, and then in John 13 and elsewhere, be as loving as Christ. Now, see, if you can do those three things on your own, you don't even need grace. Anybody able? Dismissed early.

If you want to go home early, you can do those three things. You don't need to hear about grace. So the law's demands are high and holy, out of sight.

Is it just a matter of getting at it? Well, we want to throw ourselves into the Christian life. But again, where does the dynamic of life, the resource come from? That's all involved in obedience. Critical is the fact that we are under grace, not law.

If you're under law, just have to do your best. If you're under grace, there's a whole new resource to draw upon, an entirely new hope. All right, that's just by way of introduction, just to sort of set our mind in gear to

think with God about the things these passages hold for us.

Let's first look now at the Old Covenant demand, then at the New Covenant promise, then, third, at the New Covenant fulfillment. What is the Old Covenant demand? Remember now, what is the Old Covenant? It's the law of Moses. What is the New Covenant? The gospel of the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ for all of life from start to finish.

What is the Old Covenant demand? Deuteronomy 10, 12 through 13. And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you today for your good. The Old Covenant demand is obedience, obedience from the heart, wholehearted obedience.

Here in Deuteronomy, the question, what does the Lord require? That you walk in all of His ways, not just some of them. You missed part of the law, you missed it all, right? Just like if you only kill one person, you're a murderer. It doesn't matter that you let a thousand go that you should have killed.

But your honor, if you knew how many times I held back, when everything in me said, kill them, and they deserved it. Well, you get no credit for that. You shouldn't be killing them.

I only killed one person. That's right. That's why you're called a murderer.

And of course, the scriptures say, if you fail in part of the law, you're guilty of all. It's all about being holy. Failing in one part means you're unholy, which means you fail the whole thing.

What does the Lord require? Walk in all His ways with all your heart, right? Perfect obedience to all the commands with everything that's in you, not just getting by. Keep His commandments. That's the law of the Old Covenant.

Deuteronomy 26, 16. Deuteronomy 26, 16, the Old Covenant demand what the law demands. This day, the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments.

Therefore, you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Be careful to observe them, or as some versions render it, do them. Be careful to do them or observe them.

How? With all your heart. With all your heart. Think of that.

Not just no external failure before the law, not just that, but with all your heart, from deep within the innermost being of man, obedience, really obeying, truly obeying, sincerely obeying, without reservation, completely, wholly, earnestly, with all your heart. I'm getting tired just reading it. I mean, this is demanding in every way with all of your being.

You think you did pretty well on that? Well, did you? Was it 100% of what was required and of you responding to what God commands? Wow. It's the Old Covenant demand. In this same chapter, next verse, let's see Israel's response.

Deuteronomy 26, 17. Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God and that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes and his commandments and his judgments and that you will obey his voice. Deuteronomy, second giving of the law.

Deutero, second, namos, nami, law. First at Mount Sinai, coming out of Egypt. Second time, east of the Jordan before going into the Promised Land.

Here at the second giving of the law, the law was rehearsed and the people said, the Lord is our God, we will walk in his ways, we'll keep his commandments and we will obey. They said something like that earlier, too, at Mount Sinai. Acts 19, not Acts, Exodus, I'm sorry.

Exodus 19. Exodus 19. Oh, that's good.

Very good, very good. Deuteronomy 26, 17, they said they'd do it. The second giving, Exodus 19, 7 and 8. So Moses came and called for the elders of the people and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.

Then all the people answered together and said, all that the Lord has spoken, we will do. The second giving of the law, Israel pledged to obey it. They had done something like that at the first giving of the law.

In fact, they even used the word obedience a little bit later. Exodus 24, you might want to add that to your outline. Exodus 24, 7. Then he, Moses, took the book of the covenant, that's the law, and read in the hearing of the people.

And they said, after they heard the law of God, they said, all that the Lord has said, we will do and be obedient. Pretty straightforward, their response. Now, it's wonderful to want to obey God, but if you think it's just a matter of hearing and then doing, it makes you think of what Paul wrote in Galatians 4.21, tell me you who desire to live under the law, do you hear what the law is saying? It isn't saying be committed, be zealous, try harder, get religious, try to improve.

A lot of people think that's what the law says. They might not say that, but the way they act and try to relate to God, you kind of catch on that they think it just means get better or try harder. No, it says be perfect, be as holy as God.

Can you imagine that? God's basically saying through all these commands, be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy. And all the people are saying, well, sure. They were the original promise keepers.

They were the original promise keepers. Well, you and I are thinking together. I had written right here, Jonathan, the original promise keepers.

In fact, that's really what stirred this whole new seminar that I've just started doing called Promise Believers because the kingdom of heaven is not built on man's promises to God. It's built on God's promises to man. And we'll see how critical that is even more next week when we our study is about the exceedingly great and precious promises of the new covenant, which is what we live by.

Yes, all that you have said we will do. We'll get to Acts in a minute. I mentioned that earlier.

We want to check there and see how well they did, but let's ease over that way. Let's go to Ezekiel 20 next. Ezekiel 20, verse 21.

Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me, God says, God's estimation in Ezekiel 20, verse 21, God's estimation how well they were doing on the way to the promised land at this point. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me, they did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to observe my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. You know, if you can obey the commandments,

you'd really be living.

They describe real life, no lying, no cheating, no idolatry, no selfishness, all that. If you can do that, you would live by them. Let's get a little later evaluation of them.

Acts 7, 51. Toward the end of Stephen's sermon, one of the most courageous sermons ever given, and though it cost him his life, it was then and is still today one of the most effective messages a servant of God ever preached. Many have still been touched down through the centuries.

It looked like this young man's life was snuffed out, you know, senselessly, needlessly early on. He's still preaching, you know, he's still preaching. For 2,000 years, he's been preaching and touching lives.

Acts 7, 51. Toward the end of his sermon, after he rehearsed the history of Israel and God's dealings with them, Acts 7, 51, he addresses the leaders of Israel directly. You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.

This is the application point of his sermon. In light of what I have said so far, here's the conclusion to it. Here's how it applies to you.

You are stiff-necked, you're uncircumcised in heart and ears. That is, your heart is fleshly and carnal and against God, and your ears you can't and won't hear. You always resist the Holy Spirit.

As your fathers did, so do you. So that takes the history of those people who said to God after the law was read, all you've said we will do. Takes it right up into the first century when Jesus, the provider of the new covenant, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is having the estimation of Israel given by one of his disciples here, Stephen.

Yes, yeah, God's idea of ear-tickling. Bang! On dull, hard hearts and ears. Israel miserably failed to keep their pledge to obey all of the law of God.

Miserably. They didn't walk in obedience, they walked in hard-heartedness, self-serving, self-righteous religiosity, generally. There was always a remnant, praise God, and there still is today.

But in general, these who pledged to keep his word failed miserably. And interestingly enough, now that the promise keepers has been brought up, it was on my mind too. I can appreciate the fact that men have come to Christ through that movement.

I can appreciate that homes have been blessed. I can praise God for men, some of whom have truly had an encounter with God and not just a religious hype moment. And I can say, praise God for all that, I don't have any problem with that at all.

And that's even while saying I'm not blind either to some of the critiquing of that movement that has brought up valid concerns, like some of Pastor Chuck has brought up himself, the high cost of involvement in it financially. I mean, a weekend event, like three to four million dollars come in. That's an enormous amount of money just for 10 or 15 leaders to come forth and encourage and even to rent a stadium.

That's an enormous amount of money. And the fee per man, pretty stiff. And I agree with that.

I think there's something there that needs to be re-evaluated. Another major problem that I also concur with that has been chronicled by many is the heavy psychological involvement in the leadership of promise

keepers and the message and some of their literature. And most dangerous of all, but unknown to many, in their follow-up groups, which are supposed to be all kind of encouragement groups.

And very typically, they're just like kind of 12-step self-help kind of psychobabble. And I know that personally, not just guessing by what you see up front. And I say that's a major danger and problem.

It doesn't mean that those men that were saved, you can't still rejoice. It doesn't mean any man that had his life turned around in his home life, you can't still rejoice. It's hardly ever an all or nothing thing with any of us in the kingdom of heaven, except with Jesus.

He was perfect. No criticism there. Nothing to say yes, but.

Just perfect. The rest of us, another category. And that which is yes, we want to see increased.

That which is but, on the other hand, we want to see diminished in all of our lives. And that movement needs it radically. Also, I haven't heard a lot about it, but I heard a little.

And I personally think this is a major shortcoming, the religious hype mentality. It's kind of like Israel. You get 70,000 men together, and someone proclaims the Lord Jesus and the will of God.

Are we going to obey him? What are you going to say? Oh, I don't know. I mean, of course they want to. That's why they're there.

It's sure a lot easier to say it with 70,000 shouting in your ear. And two weeks later when you're all alone and your testimony is on the line. I mean, I could tell you war stories of brothers who called me two weeks after the big hype event in total pits of despair, wondering if they're even saved.

Because they, like Israel, couldn't fulfill their pledge. Yes, all that God says we will do. Sure we want to be promise keepers.

Nothing wrong with the goal. I mean, praise God, we want to be faithful men. We want to be faithful in our word, and to our wives, and in church, and work, and everything else, and with the children.

Fine. Most of the goals you can say are biblically valid. But what's going to be the dynamic that brings that to pass? Our pledge to God? It won't be any more effective than Israel's was.

And that's why I think the Lord led me to develop this seminar. Because I think this is a far bigger issue than the cost, the psychology, the hype. And that is, how is the kingdom of heaven built? By man keeping his promises to God, or God keeping his promises to man? It's built on the latter.

And as we believe in the promises of God, as we become promised believers, we eventually are made by God into promise keepers. And I think we'll see that fits exactly what we're studying tonight. In fact, a lot of the seminar comes from tonight and next week's study.

All that you have promised we will do, know they failed miserably. You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, you know, all the way down to now. So do you.

That's God's estimation of how well they kept their pledge. Now let's shift gears here and the rest of the time. Let's not look at the old covenant demand.

Let's look at two other things, the new covenant promise and the new covenant fulfillment. First, the new covenant promise, Ezekiel 36. First time we gave this seminar, a brother sitting there at this men's retreat from three or four Calvary chapels up in the mountains out near Ramona, Calvary Chapel San Diego was hosting it.

This one brother with the promise keepers hat on came up to me afterwards. And he said, Bob, all I can say is you're absolutely right. I was praising God at that moment, but I believe that was the truth.

But to hear from someone who'd kind of gone through it, you know, yeah, yeah, it rang true to his own heart. Praise God. The new covenant promise is so much bigger than that, so much greater than that.

One of the thought before we kick into this Ezekiel 36 passage, let me ask you something. We look at Israel and we see how they handled their pledges to obey all the law of God. How's your record before God's law? I mean, it's right to learn from Israel and go, man, yeah, they kept it.

Sure. How's our record? Have you kept all of the law of God with all of your heart? You had warm thoughts about it. Stiff Neck Rebellion, that big guy, yeah.

You know, it's something to see Israel. Yeah, I intended to do that. Again, it's the thought that counts.

I mean, it's not Israel, it's all of us. We desperately need to find a better hope than all of us gathering together and chanting, all you have said, we will do all you've said. There's got to be a better hope.

And praise God, there is a better hope. I mean, there's no comparison. And we see what the new covenant offers.

The new covenant promise, Ezekiel 36, 26 and 27. Here's God speaking. Now we've shifted from man's promises to God to God's promises to man.

Here's God speaking. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone, that hard and circumcised heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh in the sense of soft, not carnal, but soft.

I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them. Oh, we've just shifted to an entirely different arena now. This is God promising.

The new covenant promise, which can result in our wholehearted obedience increasingly. God says, I'll give you a new heart, a new spirit, speaking there of regeneration, new life. Then my spirit within you, the potential of a spirit led, spirit empowered walk.

See, the new creature in Christ is not designed to live on his own best resources. Even the new creature in Christ needs God's spirit working within. See, many who come out of sin and disobedience and indulgence, they come to Christ and find forgiveness and new life.

I mean, it is beyond description. Isn't it glorious? Then just kind of assume, you know, you got to start doing it different. You did it wrong.

You start doing it different. And after all, I'm a Christian and all things have been made new. And what's being overlooked here? The work of the spirit of God, the content of God's promises, his faithfulness and his ability.

I mean, a lot of things are overlooked in that. It shows good intention and a good heart. You know, I want to please God and every Christian has some of that desire because the Lord dwells in him.

But God said, I'll put my spirit within you and I will cause you to walk and you will be careful to do my statutes. See, God's Holy Spirit is to become the motivating dynamic force behind an obedient heart. See what happens when God does this? Verse 27, I'll put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them.

Verse 27 is talking about obedience. There's an obedient life, walking in the statutes, doing what God says. But notice the dynamic.

I will put my spirit within you. And who is the subject of the verb cause and cause you? The same one, the compound verb, same one as the subject of will. I will put my spirit within you, no change of subject, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes.

There is available to the believer, the Christian, those who walk in the new covenant, there is available to them God's dynamic power at work in our lives to be creating a heart of obedience. This is a whole different arena. We've shifted from well-intended but feeble promises of man who can't follow through to the glorious life-giving, life-changing promises of God who is able to come through.

We're in a whole different universe here. Jeremiah 24-7, Jeremiah 24-7, God speaking again, Jeremiah 24-7, then I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord and they shall be my people and I will be their God for they shall return to me with their whole heart. The old covenant demanded wholehearted obedience of all the law of God.

The new covenant promises a work of God available, resource from God to make us wholehearted in our obedience toward him. Jeremiah 32, Jeremiah 32-41, and I will make, God speaking again, God promising, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from doing them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from me. Oh, the fear of the Lord, not an apprehensive, panic, dread, that's the flesh.

A godly, holy spirit filled with the fear of the Lord, loving respect for him, a dread to displease him, not that he'll bop your head in, but just how dreadful to displease such a one we love so much, who's loved us. An apprehension, the apprehension that we would displease him. Oh, how the fear of the Lord is missing in so much of the church world.

And it relates to walking according to the flesh because the spirit of God produces a reverence toward the Lord, not a cowering fear, just a loving, respectful fear. This comes from God's work in his everlasting covenant in our lives. Everlasting covenant, that is the new covenant, where all of this work of God is put in our hearts.

This comes from God's work in his everlasting covenant in our lives. Everlasting covenant, that is the new covenant, where all of this work of God is put in our hearts. And God says, I'll do this with all my heart and soul, verse 41.

Yes, I will rejoice over them, do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in the land and with all my heart and all my soul. We'll obey him with all of our heart and soul. It can't begin to come forth in fullness unless God is allowed to do with all of his heart and soul the work that sustains and develops that life of obedience.

Now, though these are promises made to Israel, don't forget where we've come through this course. We spent a lot of time in Hebrews, which repeats these same promises and applies them to whom? Us. To put it in a more, maybe precise, biblical, theological term, these promises are applied to the church, the church, the church of Jesus Christ.

They were given to Israel back then, and I've talked with some who have a hard time seeing that these promises could be transferred over to the church. Well, sure, maybe in our theological systems we'd have trouble, but God doesn't have any trouble at all in that, because in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile, and he's still going to fulfill his promises to Israel, given them the land. But there are many aspects here that he repeats in the New Testament and applies to the church.

Yes? Just Abraham saying, Abraham is the father of the faith, isn't that right there? Right on. That makes it far broader than Israel. In fact, the promise to Abraham was in you.

All the nations of the earth will be blessed. You can't escape the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant, in the church, in life in Christ. Exactly.

And that's the major missing ingredient in the law. The letter of the law kills, we saw in 2 Corinthians 3, only the Spirit gives life. Exactly.

You can't escape that issue. Remember in Hebrews 10.20, I want to jot that back in your notes here. We've camped there significantly before, but a good time to be reminded that we're not just talking about Israel when we hear these promises to the prophets.

Hebrews 10.20. Remember Hebrews 10. Just look from verse 5 on, particularly verse 8. You know, God wasn't just after sacrifices and burnt offerings. Those were just pictures.

That's not what he was looking for. Those were speaking of sin and death and God's provision and blood had to be shed to cover it all, pointing to not animals, but the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then coming down to verse 16, this is the covenant I will make with them.

I'll put my law into their hearts and minds. I'll write it on them. These are the very promises we read in Jeremiah and also Ezekiel, quoted in a letter to the church.

And then the conclusion is verse 19 of Hebrews 10. Therefore, brethren, in light of these statements about the new covenant, therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us. The contrast being you can't approach God in intimacy by the law.

The law is just a picture of a holy God and sacrifice that's needed and the holiness needed to approach him is in Christ and the sacrifice is also in Christ. And the brethren are told now we have boldness to enter by a new and living way. The new and living way is the new covenant that he just referred to three or four verses earlier.

The law was the old dead way, showing the deadness of man and that sinful man doesn't just saunter up to God. You know, where's God? Where's this holy of holies? You know, you don't just, well, if we told you and you walked in, that'd be your last step, you know. Man just doesn't saunter up to God.

God is holy, man is not. But David saw past all that. He was a man of faith.

The spirit of God enlightened David's eyes. Sacrifice and burn offerings, that's not what you're after. Those are speaking about what you're after.

He wants a contrite heart. He wants humility. He wants dependence upon him.

He wants belief in his provision and promises. And all that is applied to us. Verse 20, by a new and living way we enter the holy place, intimate fellowship with God, which he, Jesus, consecrated for us through the veil.

That is his flesh. That is when he died on the cross. When he was torn on the cross, the veil was torn in the temple.

And the new and living way is now consecrated for us. All these quotes of the new covenant, this new way to walk with God, it's now applied to us, consecrated for us. It could be translated inaugurated for us.

It could be translated instituted for us. All it's saying is the new covenant is now the possession of all those who approach God through the name and the work and the blood of Jesus Christ. Jonathan? You know how this all opens up a new way of looking at lots of familiar scriptures? Oh, yes.

Yes. 2 Corinthians 5, 17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Yeah. Old things have passed away, which is old English for animals. Yeah, yeah, that's good.

Old things have died. Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Yeah, yeah. Oh, it fits perfectly in this whole context, putting a new way to relate to God, a new person relating to God, not that old stony heart, but a new soft heart, a new creature. The old things have passed away, not ritual and regulation and commandments and procedures, but the spirit making the life of Christ available in us.

Yeah, it does. It radically changes. No, it isn't.

No, it's often taught on a more confining level of maybe habits, attitudes, thoughts and things like that, and that's included. Sure, but it's far bigger than that. Yeah, it's much more than that.

Amen. Good point. Excellent point.

OK, the new covenant. Promise. Promise of the new covenant.

God pouring his heart out. Wholeheartedly into our hearts by his spirit, doing a work within us that results in the obedience of his people. Now, the rest of the time we're going to spend, it looks like we've come a long way.

We've got more to cover, really, in the rest of the outline than we've covered so far, because we're just getting to the meat, the reality, the vitality of all. This is just sort of indicators and some tremendous New Testament verses now to apply this to our hearts and lives. Let's look for a while now at the new covenant fulfillment.

New covenant fulfillment. We'll see that this new covenant promise is available and operating in God's people today to bring us to a fulfillment increasingly of a more and more obedient life. That is a life that reflects the law of God, not through striving to live up to it, but by this dynamic internal relational work of

God in Christ.

Our life can increasingly reflect the godliness that the law is demanding. See, God's character hasn't changed. It isn't that God was holy and that didn't work too well.

So now He'll cut back a little. The standard isn't quite as high now. You know, that holiness thing didn't work, you know.

Well, I said, be holy, and they said they would, and it just didn't work. So, you know, we'll go to something else. Be better, be religious, be at church.

I mean, you know, the Lord didn't lower the standard. He's still who He is. He's still holy.

In fact, look at Luke 6.46. The Lord still wants lives that reflect holiness and show an obedient heart. Luke 6.46, Jesus said, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? He is the Lord. He is the master.

It's right to call Him Lord. We want to call Him Lord. He's the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

He said, You call me Lord, but why do you call me Lord and not do the things which I say? It's a real contradiction of our relationship to who He is to say, He's my Lord, and I live out my will, my desires, instead of His will and His desires. It doesn't go together, you know. It's right to call Him Lord.

We want to walk before Him as Lord. He is our master. We are His servants.

Yes, we're His friends, but we're a lot of things simultaneously. And being His friend, you know, on earth, sometimes when the servants get chummy with the boss, it's like the whole thing kind of crumbles, you know. It doesn't work that way with God.

No one gets so chummy with God that he's no longer God. You know, you just look at Him as one of the buddies, just one of the boys. All that crazy American jargon notwithstanding, you know, the man upstairs.

You know, there's a man up there. He's the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Before He was man, He was always God, and He's still God.

It's good to call Him Lord, but the implication is we want our lives to be a demonstration of His holiness and His will. We want Him pleased. Again, it's not a groveling apprehension.

It's a loving respect. We want to delight His heart, but our hope is not our best effort. It's His resource within us.

Remember Matthew 28, 20. Remember this, Matthew 28, 20, the implication right here on this matter of obedience. Matthew 28, 20, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

Discipleship is following Jesus. We answer His call to come follow Him. Then He says, in His name and authority, go out and make disciples of all the nations.

It will involve baptizing and teaching, helping folks start out a walk with the Lord and then build a walk with the Lord, baptizing. Being identified with the Messiah and then teaching them. Let them start out with God, identifying with the Lord.

That's related to new birth, justification. Then teach them to observe all things that I have commanded. That's growth.

That's walk. That's sanctification. Everything God has said, it's part of discipleship.

We want to observe, do all the things that He has commanded. We still want His will to be worked out in our lives. It hasn't changed.

Sometimes when this is even brought up though, that God is still the same and still wants obedience. So often the rest of the verse is forgotten. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

That's our hope of obedience. That ties back to the promises of the new covenant. God not just from heaven saying, do this and don't do that.

And we saying, we are with you. It's the Lord Jesus right with us. That's our hope.

Let's look at one more verse and then we'll take a break. Second Corinthians 3. The new covenant fulfillment, lives that can grow in obedience, in godliness, in Christ likeness, in the will of God. Second Corinthians 3, verse 3. Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh that is of the heart.

God wants to make of us letters of Christ. Really living epistles of Christ. But in order for that to happen, the message of life and Christ likeness must be written by the spirit, not written by our willpower, not written by our memorization of the commandments, but written by the spirit of God.

Where? On tablets of human hearts. A letter of Christ, a life that as it lives and walks and functions and serves, is a living statement of the Lord Jesus Christ more and more. In other words, that person would be increasingly walking in the will of the Lord.

The will of the Lord worked out through that life. That would be an obedient life. But where is it coming from? Not pledges by man to God to never fail him.

It's coming by the spirit of God doing an internal work on the heart of man. Jesus said, guard the heart carefully. Why? Because out of it flow all the issues of life.

I know we often point to our heart. We talk about, you know, things getting from our mind to our heart. But it is spiritually beyond that.

It's not a spatial issue, really. That's a good illustration. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that illustration.

But that pumping organ is not the issue. The heart, spiritually speaking, is where all the issues of life flow. Just like the heart is where all the issues of physical life flow.

The blood flows out and there's life and all. But in the heart of man, the spirit of man, the very fountainhead of his being, where the spirit of God lives and dwells in our spirit, that's to be guarded. Because that's where all the issues of life flow out, including a life that's obedient or disobedient.

All the issues of life flow out of the heart. And that's where God dwells that intimately, that deeply within us. It's not just the commandment says this and I'm walking.

I just noticed I almost do or don't do. And I try to look like I'm obeying it. It's far deeper than that.

Jesus showed that in the Sermon on the Mount. You've heard you should not commit murder. But if you have hatred in your heart for someone, you're already a murderer.

Someone might take pride in this brutal, murderous age we're in, that they've never struck anyone. And yet God has seen maybe a hundred times they had this passionate, bitter anger in their heart towards someone. Well, as far as God's concerned, they killed them.

That's murder. It's in the heart. Jesus said, you've heard that you should not commit adultery.

But I say, if you lust after someone with your eyes, you've done it. It's far beyond just the external action, though that's critical issue. And sure, for it to go beyond internal to external often has many other major implications.

But as far as God's concerned, they're both atrocious. They're both a major, life-ripping, off-robbing, destructive act of disobedience. Guard the heart with all diligence and see the Spirit of God is willing and able to write on the heart of man the law of God, that is the holiness of God.

Way down there in the deepest part of our being, the Spirit of God writing, working, creating, making a part of us the love of God, the priorities of God, the peace of God, so that that flows out in a visible life that is either obedient or disobedient. And if it's coming out from the Spirit of God doing a deep internal work, that's where an obedient life flows from. And it's far more than, you know, you just got to try your hardest.

Israel showed us that. Peter showed us that. Lord, if they all deny you, you know you can count on me.

Wonderful pledge, very impressive, very bold and courageous. And he probably meant every bit of it. How much did it take to shake him to total disobedience of his pledge and of his Lord? Oh, about three servants, quizzing him a bit, near the point of trial and danger.

In fact, the gospels say that all of the disciples made the same pledge. It wasn't just Peter. We always talk about Peter, one of the gospels, and they all said the same thing.

It wasn't just Peter. The disciples couldn't keep their pledge, nor could the Israelites. But praise God, there's one who's always able to keep his promises.

That's the one who says, I will put my Spirit in you. I will write my law in your heart. I'll take that holy reality of the law and start applying it internally to your heart.

Oh, this is so hard to stop right now. But we will. Mercy for the body.

We'll stop right here. Take just 10 minutes. Let's get right back on 10 minutes, because we've got, we might have 45 minutes left here, just on these last few verses, because they're the heart of the whole issue, really.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11354.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/bob-hoekstra/growing-in-the-grace-of-god-19-new-covenant-obedience-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net