

Growing in the Grace of God #20 - New Covenant Obedience Part 2

by Bob Hoekstra

The Christian life is not about trying hard to be like Jesus, but about letting Jesus live in and through us, and living out the salvation God has worked in us and for us with fear and trembling.

Duration: 56:02

Scripture: John 8:29, Colossians 1:27, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Hebrews 13:20-21

Topics: "New Covenant", "Christian Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a shiny new car representing the Christian life. He emphasizes the importance of praying according to God's will and repenting of doubt, disobedience, hypocrisy, impatience, and lukewarmness. The speaker encourages listeners to have faith in God's power and not rely on their own efforts. He highlights the need to work out one's salvation with fear and trembling, contrasting it with the American approach of bold promises and personal expectations. The sermon emphasizes humility and reliance on God rather than relying on human strength.

Transcript

In study number 10, New Covenant Obedience, we've looked at some wonderful things already. We've looked at the old covenant demand, which was 100% observation and doing of the commandments with 100% of our being, you know. No room to fail in part, externally or internally.

Can't miss some of the commandments and can't do it with less than the whole heart. I mean, we're talking, be totally like God, externally and internally. That's all the law is commanding, you know, it's no big deal.

You know, just a matter of, it came to my mind many years ago. How hard do you have to try to be exactly like Jesus Christ? Yeah, harder than I've ever tried before, really. I mean, that's where the so-called nervous breakdowns come.

Yeah, just a little bit harder for the next 150 million years. Yeah, I mean, the law is high and holy. It's not just saying, clean up your act a little bit, go through some reformation.

It's saying be like God, the whole covenant demand, show that perfect godliness, internal and external, all the time with all your being. Whoa, what a standard. And Israel, though they said, we'll do it, they failed.

Though the disciples said, you know, we won't forsake you, they did. But, praise the Lord, there's a new covenant promise. Not man promising to God, but rather God promising to man.

And we've gone from the new covenant promise of a work of God internal to bring about an obedient life more and more. We've gone into the fulfillment of the new covenant. New covenant fulfillment, walking in godliness increasingly.

Seeing that this new covenant promise of God working internally is available to and operating in God's people today, and the end result, the more we walk in that work of God, the more obedience develops in our lives. We looked at 2 Corinthians 3.3, the spirit of God writing on our hearts, the message of the law, making us a letter of Christ. See, this is the spirit of God making us a witness, the spirit of God making us Christ-like, the spirit of God becoming the dynamic.

I can't remember if we've talked about this in this class. It seems like the Lord has me teaching in so many settings. If it's a repeat, it doesn't hurt.

It's a good reminder. But in this situation, I often think of a little story I first heard from Ray Steadman back in the early 1970s when God was using him mightily in my own life, along with a few other servants of his, as instruments of light and truth. And I was exhausted after nearly five years of pastoral ministry in the late 1960s, early 70s.

And he told a story I almost flipped and died when I was listening to it. It was just like, that's me. Oh, that's me.

He talked about the Christian life as a car, a nice, brand-new, shiny car. And you get born again, and you get this gift of this beautiful, shiny, brand-new car. And it's just so impressive and so beautiful.

It's a convertible, and it's red or whatever you like cars to be. It's everything you wanted in a car. And oh, you're just so thrilled and pleased, and you spend a lot of time polishing it up.

Oh, this is my Christian life. This is so great. Every now and then, you'd even take it out of the garage and take it out on the street in public and be a little bit of a witness, and look what God gave me.

But the way you did it is you opened the garage door, and you took the brake off, and you got back behind the bumper, and you just started shoving. And you started pushing that car. And man, you were so motivated.

You loved the Lord. You wanted everybody to see what God had done for you and given you. There was no labor, really.

You just shoved. And you figured that's how you had to do it because everybody else seemed to be doing that. In fact, they had seminars on how to shove your Christian car better.

And if you got a little tired, or your foot slipped, or you banged your nose, you just went to another seminar. It was a little leverage, and you just weren't in the right place. And you could shove a few more miles.

Boy, this Christian life is great. Kind of tiring, but there's a ways to learn how to build your technique and all. He said, Then someday, God sends a servant your way who asks an amazing question.

He says, What on earth are you doing? I'm living the Christian life. I'm serving God. Yeah, but what are you doing shoving the bumper to make it happen? Well, that's the only way you can make this thing go.

Everybody's doing it. Look, they're everywhere. In fact, look, I just came from a seminar.

It cost me \$150 to get this last mile out of me. Wait a minute. Stop shoving.

Come here a minute. Take it around in front of the car. Open the hood and go.

You see that? No. What's that? That's the engine. That's the power station in this car.

Come here. Sit down here behind this wheel. Turn this key of faith.

Put your trust in that engine. Boom! Whoa! Where did this come from? What a picture that is. I mean, so many of us shoved that car.

I mean, I did. I shoved it three years before I pastored. When I pastored, I just shoved harder.

And then I started yelling at everybody else to shove. Come on. We've got to do this for God.

God's counting on us. Come on. Don't you love Him? We were talking about this at break time.

Old Covenant Community Church. Come in. We'll slay in the spirit.

Spirit of the law. The letter kills. Come on in.

You've got all the death you can carry out. Come on in. We'll tell you how to try harder.

We'll tell you how to bear down. We've got plenty of bumper pushers here. And some have shoved a long way.

Some for years. That's not the Christian life. That's human religiosity.

Sometimes well-intended. Sometimes out of devotion to the Lord. But that's not the way the Lord designed it.

You can see how the difference in just the Scriptures we've looked at tonight. I mean, there is a power source that comes with that gift of life eternal. And that power source is God Himself.

You mean the batteries are included? Yeah, that's right. And they don't run out. That's right.

They don't have to be replaced. It's God writing on our heart by His Spirit. Oh, guard the heart.

For from the heart flow all the issues of life. We want a real, vital, Christ-like, growing, maturing, fruitful, obedient life to come out. It all flows from the heart.

And in the new covenant, which is the covenant of grace, contrasted with the old covenant of law, God's Spirit is right there at the fountainhead, giving life. Letting that be our source to draw upon. The law, that's shoving the car.

The law is our best effort to live up to the standards of God. To work for God, to please God. The new covenant is the covenant of grace.

God's provision by His Spirit to supply what is needed for us, in us, through us. I like the way John Corson has put it. Whatever God wants out of us, God is willing and able to work into us.

That's a good way to say it. And praise God, He knows of the new covenant grace of God. Now, Christ-like obedience.

We say, I want to be like Christ. Well, let's look at John 8, 29, coupled with Colossians 1, 27. It's a great correlation of scripture.

By the way, one of the great things of teaching through the scriptures, which I love the commitment of the Calvary chapels to do it, is it exposes you to all the Word of God, that the Spirit of God might keep bringing these correlations. Here's the whole statement of God, but look how this statement works with that one, and that one, and this one, and what this adds to those four. I mean, that's a biblical theology.

And I commend to you that correlating work of the Spirit of God, you can find it in the epistles and in the Old Testament, where God is speaking and teaching through His prophets and apostles. And He quotes other passages of what He said elsewhere. Bringing together, on this subject, John 8, 29 and Colossians 1, 27 is a life-giving insight from Heaven.

John 8, 29. Here's Jesus. Here's the kind of life He led.

And He who sent me is with me. Oh, the Father was with Jesus every step of the way. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

Here's the testimony of Jesus. He always pleased the Father, and the Father was always with Him. Elsewhere, we've seen already in this course of study, the Father provided the resource of life for Jesus.

John 6, 57, John 14, 10, and elsewhere. Jesus lived independence upon the Father. It's glorious reality too often missed.

We say, I want to be like Christ, and we look at what He did and said, and His attitude and character and behavior, and we just kind of want to, out of love, mimic Him. You know, people say things like, how does that saying go? When people copy or mimic, and it's one of the... Yeah, one of the greatest compliments is to copy someone, mimic them, mime them, try to be like them, you know. And a lot of Christians, pardon? Yeah, counterfeit though, yeah, because it's not the real thing.

It comes from the wrong source. It might be well intended, motivation of love. I want to be like Jesus, and I'm trying hard to do it.

But again, how hard do you have to try to be like Jesus? Yes, yes, amen. And even that has its own problems when He starts walking on water. I mean, it gets real complicated.

But even that isn't the greatest thing. It's what's going on inside Him with the Father. And the veil was pulled back on that in the Gospel of John and elsewhere.

Yes, yes, yes, sure, yes. Yes. Yeah, we're heading there right now.

Yeah, we're thinking together, right where we're heading. John 8, 29. Father was with Him, and here was the consequence.

I always do those things that please Him. What a testimony. Don't you think that would be the obedient life? To always please the Lord.

That's the perfect life of obedience. And Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Yeah, some might die for the Lord if it's, yeah, quick, shotgun, you know.

But nailed to a cross, I mean, the worst kind of death. Even that, He stayed obedient. Whether He was healing the blind, raising the dead, walking on water, or having people love Him, or lie about Him.

Sing Hosanna, or say crucify Him. Or actually beat Him, or actually execute Him. Here was His testimony.

I always do those things that please the Heavenly Father. Well, that's the perfect life of obedience. Now, that's Jesus, but think of this glorious reality.

Couple that with Colossians 1, 27, the end of that verse. Colossians 1, 27. Remember this statement? The end of the verse.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Oh, the riches of the glory of the mystery that God wants to get out to all the nations. That is, among all the Gentiles.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. I love these three verses, 27, 28, and 29. It's kind of our theme verses at Living in Christ Ministries.

28, Him we preach. You know what our message is? Christ in you, the hope of glory. There's a glorious hope.

Hope of getting to glory someday. Glorious hope of transformation along the way, and whatever else is needed. And it hinges on this, Christ in you.

The same Jesus, who always pleased the Heavenly Father, lives in you and me. Now, there's a mind blower. Do we get up each day with that as our hope? Or is our hope, I'm going to do better today, Lord, I'm sorry.

Do we get up thinking about what we must do or mustn't do? Well, that's fine if our hope goes right back to this one who lives in us. See, residing in our lives is one whose life is always pleasing to the Father. Is always holy, is always perfect, is always loving.

Always measures up to the law. He's the only one who ever did. Now, are we going to vainly go about the business of trying to copycat Him? Or are we actually going to learn increasingly to let Him live in and through us? We quote a lot of the right verses.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who lives. I promise, Lord, I'll never fail you.

Wait a minute. It is no longer I who lives. Hey, those don't seem to go together.

Oh, I promise, Lord, I'll always keep your command. It's no longer I who lives. But Christ lives in me.

Galatians 2.20. Maybe it's one of your favorites. Sure is mine. It was a bit of a favorite of mine before I even had a clue what it meant.

It just sounded great. You know, like, wow, man, this somehow sounds tremendous. Now, I'll tell you, I like to meditate periodically on that verse.

That's where the life is. It's not me trying to be like Him. It's Him being seen in me.

How hard does Jesus have to try to be like Jesus? It's a natural. It's a natural. He is holy.

He is loving. He is perfect. I am not holy.

I am not loving. I am not perfect. That's why it's know thyself.

Okay, hang on now. I know this stirs questions. Oh, I'm so glad.

Those questions mean we're thinking together with the Lord, I believe. I believe we're on track. Wouldn't it be glorious to have a life of increasing obedience? What's your hope of that? Christ in you.

The hope of glory. Any glorious thing God wants for us ultimately hinges on the fact that Christ lives in us. Yes, He gave His life for us, but He did it so that He might give His life to us.

And we get the first part clear, we're not born again. But if we don't see the rest of it, we're back shoving at the back bumper of that car. Maybe polish up real pleased.

Oh, so happy to have that Christian life. Oh, look at this. God gave me this.

It's wonderful. But boy, it's hard to push. He's the power source.

He's the life. You might want to tuck in even right here. It just came to my mind.

Colossians 3, 4, which says, When Christ who is our life appears, then you'll appear with Him in glory. Speaking of the return of the Lord. But the point for us here is not the return of the Lord, but the fact of who He is.

Christ who is our life. Christians know that Christ gives them life. But check with Christians.

Ask. What is that life that He gives? Well, it's eternal life. Is there any other way to describe it? Can it be more particular? Yes.

Christ is our life. The life He gives us is a share in His own. As surely as a vine shares its life with every branch connected to it, that's exactly what Jesus said.

I'm the vine, you're the branches. What's flowing out of that vine is holy, loving, and perfect. When we are drawing on that, we are obedient to the Father.

We are pleasing in His sight. He's just as pleased with that life now as He was when He looked down from heaven and said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. That's genuine Christianity.

It's not churchianity. It's not religiosity. It's not man's best effort to be like Christ.

Do you know what that is? That's back under the law. That's drawing on human resource to be like God. I was kind of kidding at break time.

If anyone could have a nervous breakdown, there's a candidate. Someone trying to be like God without God the source and the cause of it. That can lay a pretty heavy load on you.

Now, look at these next two verses. These verses are astounding, I believe, how they bring some of this together that we're seeking God to speak to us about. Philippians 2, 12-13.

Philippians 2, 12-13. There's a lesser kind of immediate issue in the first part of the verse. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.

Talking about their obedient walk with the Lord and how it might have been affected by Him being there or not. That's not the thing. Be constant whether these famous or important or mature believers and leaders are with us or not.

But here's a universal, bigger thing for all of us. But now, much more in my absence. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Oh, these verses are getting at the heart of where God's taking us tonight on this matter of obedience. Work out your salvation.

Obviously, it doesn't mean work for your salvation. Nor does it mean work out your own deal with God. I mean, people use this verse in the craziest way.

Everybody says, work out your own salvation. Like they're cutting a deal with God. A special arrangement.

You ask people, are things okay between you and God? Oh, yeah, yeah. We've worked that out. Please.

If it's worked out any other way than the one God worked out for you, forget it. If you can't explain it to me, you're in big trouble. If you explain it and it's not what He worked out, you're in disastrous.

And it's not work for your salvation. You just got to do all you can. No, it's that salvation God has worked in you and for you is to be worked out.

It's to be lived out. It's to mature and develop and be seen. And take action.

And touch other lives. It's to include a walk of obedience. That salvation God has worked for us and worked in us is to now be worked out through us.

But notice. Notice how it's to be done. This is an amazing set of words.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. With fear and trembling. Is that the general American approach to living out the Christian life? Working it out? Hey, God save me.

Thanks, Lord. Clear the decks. Here I go.

Or we rally together. Are we going to take this city for Christ? And the throng goes, yes! And are we going to do it this year? Yes! And we work out our salvation with bold promises and proclamations and personal expectations. I mean, after all, we are Americans.

Good, Jonathan. What a class. Can you see how this cuts against the grain of religious flesh? Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Fear and trembling? Well, we took the frontier. We put a man on the moon. We've got the whole American church growth movement to lean back on.

Fear and trembling? Hey, we'll just do it. Nike Community Church. We'll just do it.

I mean, this just nails the flesh. This is not the way we're kind of programmed in the flesh to do it. Yes, that salvation God's worked in us is to be worked out, lived out.

It's to become action and life seen as well as life received within. But it must be with fear and trembling. Fear, that is awe and amazement.

Awe and amazement. Also with trembling, that is with a sense of humility and need. A sense of inadequacy, in other words.

Yes, I'm sorry I said it. It's almost un-American. Inadequacy.

Yes, low self-esteem. Yes, this is not designed to make us feel good about ourselves. But it is designed to let us walk in life abundant.

Self, we don't want to feel good about it. We want to learn how to deny it. Fear and trembling.

Why fear and trembling? Why awe and amazement coupled with humility and need? For, the next verse explains why we must walk that way. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure. This is why God wants us living out this salvation with an attitude of on the one hand awe and amazement and concern for him.

As well as trembling, a sense of inadequacy and humility and need. Because it is God who works in you. By the way, this fits another illustration of something we've looked at, I don't know how many times in this class.

We talked way back about living daily by the grace of God. And said, how do you live daily by the grace of God? We see how you get saved by his grace. But how do you live by his grace? Because we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

We are to live by grace as well as get birthed by grace. And we saw that two great biblical realities involved are humility and faith. Remember that part of the study? Humility, James 4, 6. God is opposed to the proud, those with high self-esteem.

God is opposed to the proud. But he gives grace to the humble. Those who admit they can't come up with what's needed.

You know, like perfect holiness. God gives grace, enablement, undeserved enablement to the humble. And then faith, Romans 5, 2. Through whom, through Jesus, we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

The whole kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of grace. We stand in grace. It's all around us.

It's what the kingdom is about. Here's the question. How do you access that to use it in daily living? That was a timely amen, too.

Well, Romans 5, 2 says, by faith. Through whom, through Jesus, by faith, we have access into this grace in which we stand. Every time we face any issue of life by faith in the Lord Jesus.

A Bible study. A problem at home. A human relations impossibility.

An assignment, an open door. A bad habit. A vision of service.

Any time we face that by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom, by faith, through Jesus, by faith, we have access into this grace in which we stand. Every time we trust in any issue, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's like dipping into that ocean of grace and accessing grace and living by it. Humility and faith are critical to living daily by the grace of God. See, humility says, I can't do it.

Do what? What's demanded? What's demanded? Be as holy as God. As perfect as the Father, as loving as Christ. Humility says, I can't do that.

I can't push the car as fast as it's designed to run. A speedometer says 140 and I'm thrilled over 1.1 mile an hour. I just can't do it.

Humility admits it can't. I can't. Faith says, He can.

Being holy, being loving, being perfect, not even a strain for the Lord Jesus Christ. He's God. And He lives in me, my hope of glory.

Neither one of those is a work. Humility is not a work. Faith is not a work.

They lead to works produced by God's grace unleashed in our lives. Humility says, I can't do the work. Humility isn't a work.

It says, I can't do the work. Faith isn't a work. Faith is a confidence in the work of another.

Humility says, I can't. Faith says, He can. Where's the I can't here? Fear and trembling.

Where's the He can? It's God at work in me. That's what I'm counting on. That's what I'm believing.

God is working in me. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling because it is God who works in you. Both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Life in the new covenant. Communion. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

We take that confessing that's our arrangement with God every time we take the Lord's Supper. It's all about the grace of God at work. It's all about God working in us.

He first worked for us that He might come to dwell in us. And ever after, He wants to work in us. This again is what sets religion, religious Christianity, cults and dead world religions totally in a category of death.

And this alone in one of life and reality. It's God at work in us. I believe with all my heart the scriptures exhort us, exemplify and imply that every day we should rise up hungry for, eager for, a sense of need for and wanting to see God at work in and through us.

Nothing less will ever be big enough. The only way that salvation, that saving work of God in Christ that He's worked in us can ever be worked out is because God is in there working in us. God at work in man.

That's what the gospel of grace is all about. Do we wake up every day aware Christ lives in me? He's my hope of glory. When I get up in the morning, everything about this tabernacle I live in wants me to think of the flesh and the old man and everything else.

Outer man is perishing. Every morning it's a bigger battle. Yes, good point.

I do believe that we often learn the humility part more rapidly than the faith part. And I think that's fine. The only way that salvation, that saving work of God in Christ that He's worked in us can ever be worked out is because God is in there working in us.

God at work in man. That's what the gospel of grace is all about. Do we wake up every day aware Christ lives in me? He's my hope of glory.

When I get up in the morning, everything about this tabernacle I live in wants me to think of the flesh and the old man and everything else. Outer man is perishing. Every morning it's a bigger battle.

The other part. Yes, good point. I do believe that we often learn the humility part more rapidly than the faith part.

And I think that's fine. Because it's like clearing the decks. It's like God's motivating work so we will want to find a resource sufficient.

We'll want to receive and believe His promises. We'll want to count on what He said to count on. And so many of us for many years fight the humility part.

Why can't I do it like all the rest of them? My goodness, if they knew how inadequate I was, they'd probably kick me out of the church. Everybody comes together, just smile and praise the Lord. They all go off, oh, I hope they don't know.

If they knew what I was like. We're all the same. We're all inadequate.

Yeah, we ought to have t-shirts like that. The personally inadequate church of Jesus Christ. Comma.

But fully sufficient in Him. On the back or something. One of those front and back messages.

I'm faking it every Sunday for two hours just like you. That's for the tape. That's good.

Jonathan Doan. Signed Jonathan. That's great.

Yes, and you know, we kind of hide it. We don't want our inadequacy known. We don't want to face it.

We certainly don't want anyone else to ever think. I mean the revolution that started my own life right there. On personal inadequacy.

When I finally realized, you're trying to build the greatest church ever for God. You can't even build the worst ever church for God. Why don't you give up? You shoved that car.

You've got a spiritual hernia, I guess. I mean, I was hurting. Yeah, that's a good point.

It gets a little tough. You know, uphill. It rolls back on you.

Oh, you guys are too much. Yes. You know, really, that's why this promise believer seminar that the Lord, I believe, laid on my heart to do.

Is, you know, forget the hype. Forget the money. Forget the psychology and promise keepers.

That's all bad news stuff. But there's a more profound issue. Where is your hope? Promising to God to be a faithful man? How about admitting you'll never be one on your own? Lord, would you please make me one? Let God go to work inside.

He's an expert at making faithful men. He has made many through the ages. He's made all of us, whenever we've trusted him, more faithful than we ever were before on our own.

He's still able to do it. Oh, this phrase here. It is God who works in you.

Oh, there's so many scriptures that echo that. And I'll tell you, more and more through the years, this is where I go when I get up in the morning. We were talking about this recently, weren't we? What do you do when you get up in the morning? How do you make this practical? What's the walk? I get up talking to the Lord about verses just like this.

I didn't used to. I used to get up chanting old covenant pledges to God. And the thing is, you're a church.

Not only hiding your own inadequacy, but everyone's telling you you're adequate. Come on, you can do it. Come on, you've got it in you.

We know we're counting on you. Come on, you can. And you're trying to say I can't.

They won't let you say I can't. Cut out that humility and get some self-confidence. Think of that.

God is opposed to the self-confident. The proud. The ones who think I can do it.

I can handle it. That's the worst place to be in. I started out trying to build my confidence in myself to be faithful to serve God.

What a bankruptcy that was. Now I look in the scriptures and I can't believe it. How blind can you be, Bob? And you were the pastor.

And I'm telling everybody else how to do it. I'm the lead bumper pusher. Come on now.

Come on. I'm looking at you folks and I can tell you have not been shoving that bumper right. Okay, let's go a little further here.

Before we get in a ditch. For it is God who works in you. Now notice this.

Not only a work of God within is what's needed. But look at this. Both to will and to do for his good pleasure.

See, his good pleasure, that's obedience. That which pleases him. But both in the willing and the doing.

Now think of the implications of that. The way God designed the Christian life. It's to be lived out in fear and trembling.

Because it involves God at work within. Not man at work to make it come out. And God is at work both to will and to do.

Remember Roman 7? To will I find. But to do I find not. How many Christians think if they're just willing that will take care of it? Yeah, I'm willing.

Yeah, okay. Yeah, I'm for that. Count me in.

You know, sign up chief for an all night prayer meeting. What do you think I am? Carl Luke Worm? You kidding? Give me that page. So willing.

Of course that was four weeks before the event. Fifty signed up. Here comes the prayer vigil.

Who knows how many will show up. It won't be fifty. Maybe three.

Maybe some miraculous twenty. Overwhelming twenty. But it won't be fifty.

Why? Because even though they let God work the willingness in them. The rest of the way they'd handle it. See it's God who works in you both.

I mean there's the word both. To will and to do. It's just as important to have God working in us.

To the doing. As it is the willing. It hit me one day in this verse.

When I was still pastoring and starting to have my eyes open to some of these things. By the spirit of God and others who were ministering to me. It hit me that there's like millions of saints.

In hundreds of millions of incidences. That got swallowed up in the carnal flesh hoping religious black hole. That exists between willing and doing.

Yeah I will, I will. Do they? Generally the ones that do. And consistently do.

Are those who are increasingly believing. It's God who is at work in you both. To will and to do.

They don't just assume once willing hey that's taken care of. Once willing hey I'm going to do it. Oh yeah? Check Roman 7 again.

Might as well you're headed there. The willing I find. But to perform I find not.

Praise God that he works a willingness in us. But the willingness even comes quicker than the doing. So often once willing we think we'll handle it.

No God must stay involved. Sure if we're not willing to do something it's right to pray. Lord touch me work in my heart.

I want to be willing to do whatever you want. And God has his ways to work. Within and then externally to make us more open for the work within.

But even willing that's not a time to stop depending. That's not a time to stop counting on God working inside. Oh Lord thank you my desire in that area is growing.

I'm more and more willing to do this or not do that. Or go there or not go there or whatever. But Lord I'm still looking to you.

Oh keep working in there. Until that willing becomes doing. Lord don't stop now.

Please. Because I hear that black hole swirling out there. As I run off to do forgetting you must be working in me.

Both to willing to do. And here I go I disappear and everybody said where is he? He said he was going to. Yeah he either didn't know or forgot.

That it is God who works in you both. To will and to do of his good pleasure. Sounds like more dependence and trust than we ever imagined doesn't it? See we need the Lord as much today.

To walk with him as we needed him to get birthed into him. Don't think in those terms. The flesh lies to us you're able.

The enemy says. Hey here's something. You're not like all these other Christian flakes.

You can handle it. Just puffing us up for a mighty fall. Yeah like the garden really.

You don't die come on. You're going to be like God. Same old lie.

Still working today. Now it's you can be like God by doing what he told you not to do. Well that makes sense.

Now you can be like God on your own best effort. Which he told us not to do. More of the same basic original lie.

We need God working within. You know a great prayer is included at the end of one of the most majestic books of the Bible. Hebrews.

Little side note if you're having trouble understanding Hebrews. I commend to you Andrew Murray's commentary. Some of you have taken that class.

I spent the last six months slowly reading a few pages of that commentary. And just the verses over and over again and praying. Oh it was a most glorious devotional months I've had in years.

Oh it's the best commentary I've ever found by anyone on any book anywhere. It's astounding. So biblically profound.

So full of that book and the correlation of scripture. And so taught by the Spirit of God. With worship and majesty given to the Lord Jesus.

It is astounding. And you can see the kind of book it is as the book of Hebrews comes to this climactic point. Of the prayer in Hebrews 13 20 and 21.

And it's so right on to our subject tonight. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead. That great shepherd of the sheep.

Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you complete. In every good work.

To do his will. Working in you. What is well pleasing in his sight.

Through Jesus Christ. To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Years ago God grabbed my heart with this prayer. In fact many years ago God started to turn my prayer life away from whatever I could think to pray to him. To Holy Spirit inspired prayers that he'd already recorded in the word.

And so I just had a radical impact on my own prayer life. And this is a prayer I've prayed for my own walk with the Lord. My dear wife Dini.

Our kids. Those I've ministered to. And I still do it today including for you guys here.

I mean you can't miss. If you want a prayer that relates to an obedient life. And at the same time be exercising faith in God to be doing it.

You can't beat this prayer. It gathers up so many things we've studied in a prayer. God do this.

See it's sort of a benedictory prayer. Now may the God of peace. Verse 21.

Make you complete. This is a prayer that God do a work on us and in us. Who is this God? The one who brought up the Lord Jesus from the dead.

The God of resurrection. The great shepherd of the sheep. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

The new covenant. May this God make you complete. In every good work to do his will.

Well if that isn't obedience. I don't know how you define it. If God's answering this prayer in our life.

If we're praying. If this is our heart of dependence. If this is our desire.

This is how obedience is going to come. God. The God of resurrection.

The God of the new covenant. The God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May he make you complete.

May he outfit you. Perfect you. Equip you.

Develop you. In every. Good thing.

To do his will. Well that's a life of obedience. To have God completing us in every good work to do his will.

Working in us. We're back to God working inside. For it's God who works in you.

The scriptures stress this. It's too easy to miss it. The Christian life is God working in and through us.

Not us. We're working in the flesh for God. What is he working in us? What is well pleasing in his sight? His will.

Again we're back to obedience. How does he do it? Oh. Not by a seminar on how to shove harder.

Look. Through Jesus Christ. The work of the Father.

By the Spirit. Using the life of the Lord Jesus. Who he is and what he's done for us.

And what he provides in us. That's where obedience comes from. We're back to that perfect life of obedience.

Jesus. No wonder to him. To whom be glory forever and ever.

This is a work of God. By his Spirit. Using the resource and person of his Son.

No wonder he gets the glory for it. It's perfect. Great prayer to pray.

For our own walk with God and for one another. It's the will of God. He'll do his will.

He'll hear. You know you're heard. He'll do it.

This is what he wants to do. In conclusion. Let's just, if you'll hang on for about five minutes.

All those moments of wonderful edifying humor. He doesn't count his class time. We'll forget that.

Just give me a few minutes grace. In conclusion. I think some significant important points.

Important issues. How to respond to these things. Certainly appropriate for us to repent.

Of doubt. And of disobedience. Or of hypocrisy.

Pretending like we got it together. Or even impatience. I want to be like Jesus now.

You know. Even the Son was perfected through the things that he suffered. Also repenting maybe of half-heartedness.

Lukewarmness. That's just all part of humility. Admitting again we can't and haven't been able to do it right.

But not only that. Side of humility. Maybe God has stirred our hearts to faith.

How to respond? Believe the truth we've just read. Believe God works in us. Both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Count on it. Rely on him. Expect it.

Ask God to fully do such in our lives. Ask him with all of our heart. Open to all of his work in every area of our lives.

Thanking him. Depending upon him. Expecting him to.

This is the faith part. He's told us how he does it. Let's believe him.

Well this is hard for me to believe. Don't shove harder. Say Lord tell me that one more time.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Lord just take me back through that one more time. Or a hundred and one more times.

Faith comes by hearing. Just keep telling me this truth Lord. And believe it.

Meditate on verses like Romans 8.4. Romans 8.4. The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. The righteous requirement of the

law. Be holy.

Be perfect. You know there's a way for that requirement to be increasingly fulfilled in our lives. In other words we walk more and more that way.

How? If we'll walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. We're back to humility and faith. My flesh isn't enough Lord.

My zeal and dedication. You cut it. That's flesh.

I'm counting on your Holy Spirit Lord. Depending on your spirit. Looking to your spirit.

By your spirit. May Christ live abundantly in and through me. Galatians 3.3. Great verses to meditate on this matter of obedience.

Galatians 3.3. Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit? Born again by the spirit? Finding new life in Christ by the spirit? Are you now being made perfect by the flesh? By self-effort? Self-striving? Back to my pledges? My resources? Are we that foolish? Sometimes. If we're birthed by the spirit, how are we going to grow by the spirit? The law says be perfect. How are we going to be made perfect more and more? Like Christ in other words.

By the flesh? Are we that foolish? Let's not be. It's got to be by the spirit. Great verse to meditate on.

And certainly 2 Corinthians 3.5 which we've been to before and it's great to touch on again. 2 Corinthians 3.5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves. But I've got to be obedient.

Yeah, and I want to be obedient too. God wants it. And I think we want it.

Here's the marvel. It doesn't source out of our resources. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves.

That's the humility part. Here's the faith part. But our sufficiency is from God.

What we need to grow in obedience, the sufficient resource, the dynamic of a godly life, we find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son who dwells in us. And we'll close.

This is our last scripture for the night. 2 Thessalonians 2.16-17 It's another benedictory prayer. 2 Thessalonians 2.16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and, notice this, good hope by grace.

May He comfort your hearts and, notice this, establish you in every good word and work. There we are again. Obedience.

What's our hope of obedience? Well, I need to be established in every good word. Say it right. Every good work.

Do it right. How are you going to do it? On best effort? How about this? How about the Lord Jesus and God the Father comforting and establishing you in every good work and work. It's a work of God.

The creating of an obedient life is a work of God on us, in us, and through us. And we have good hope by grace. This is not of salvation.

This is a good hope by grace of an established, obedient walk and service. Even the hope of obedience. Having the Lord establish us in every good word and work.

Let's pray together. Lord, we say to this prayer, Amen. We need nothing less than this.

Nothing less than this will be sufficient. Nothing less will fulfill your will toward us. Nothing else will let us walk in your will before you.

Lord, we do desire to be obedient. We want to please you in every good word and good work. But Lord, we humbly admit we do not have it within our own resources.

We humbly bow down and say, Lord God Almighty, you're able, you're sufficient. Work in us, Lord, both to will and to do of your good pleasure. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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