

Obedience of Grace - Illustrated by Noah

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of new covenant obedience, where faith in Jesus Christ enables us to obey God's commands supernaturally.

Duration: 52:00

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:11-14, John 16:7-11

Topics: "Noah"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Great Commission and God's heart for the world. He uses the story of Noah and the Ark as a picture to illustrate this concept. The preacher explains that the Old Testament and the New Testament are connected, with the Old Testament serving as a seed form of the fully developed truth found in the New Testament. He emphasizes the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit for understanding and studying the Bible.

Transcript

Good afternoon. Such a privilege to be with you, and such a privilege in my heart to be able to proclaim the unsearchable riches of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we come to the study of God's Word, there is a principle of Bible study that's absolutely indispensable, a principle that we can't take for granted, that we cannot live without.

Now, as you study this precious book, you will find many helpful things, books of all kinds, commentators and concordances and word studies and atlases and sermons and all kinds of helps. But there's only one thing indispensable, and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Only God can unveil His Son.

He who has revealed the truth must now illumine our hearts that we might behold the Son of God. Jesus said Mary had chosen the best part, the good part. It isn't that she chose Bible study over ministry.

It's that she sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus and was taught by Him, taught of God. And so, even though we've already prayed, I'm going to ask you to acknowledge the Lord's presence with me again. Bow with me and let's commit our time unto Him that He might show Himself and that we might behold Him in a living way.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank You that You have put in our hearts a Bible teacher, a resident, the life of God Himself, whoever searches the depths of God and unveils the Lord Jesus to

hungry hearts. You have promised if we would come as dry ground that You would rain upon us, if we would come with our mouths open that You would fill us.

And so this afternoon we wait upon You and we thank You for everyone that You've drawn here. We pray that You might prepare our hearts to behold again the vision of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You in advance that You're going to meet us where we are and take us where You'd have us.

We pray in the all-prevailing name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. I'm going to ask you to turn, please, to Hebrews 11 and then mark that, and I promise we'll get back to it.

But first I want to share a verse from Deuteronomy. We'll be in Hebrews 11, but Deuteronomy chapter 30, please. Deuteronomy chapter 30, beginning at verse 11.

For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It's not in heaven that you should say, who will go up to heaven for us and get it for us and make us hear it that we may observe it. Nor is it beyond the sea that you will say, who will cross the sea for us to get it and make us hear it that we may observe it.

But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. This passage is clearly about obeying the Lord. And the Holy Spirit through Moses says, don't say it's impossible to obey the Lord.

Don't say it's out of reach. Don't say it's like reaching up to heaven. Who's going to bring it down to me? Don't say it's across the blue sea.

I can't reach it. He said it's near you. It's in your mouth.

It's closer than your teeth. It's closer than your tongue. It's in your heart.

It's closer than the blood that flows through your veins. Obeying God. It's not out of reach.

What did Moses have in mind when he gave us that word? What did God have in mind? The Apostle Paul quoted that very passage in the New Testament, Romans chapter 10. And he added one sentence of explanation. After he quoted that in Romans 10, verses 5 to 8, in verse 8 we read, the word is near you in your mouth and in your heart.

And then Paul said, that is the word of faith which we preach. Faith makes obedience a possibility. It makes it near.

It brings it into you, close. And the reason faith does that is because faith has an object. And the object of faith has a name.

And His name is Jesus. Faith lays hold of Jesus, making obedience not only possible, but a delight. What I'd like to share with you, brothers and sisters, this afternoon and, Lord willing, tomorrow, is the wonder of what it means to obey the Lord supernaturally.

To obey the Lord by a mighty miracle. There's a secret to obeying the Lord. In my little circles, we call it new covenant obedience.

Some folks don't like that because they have a problem, since the church in this dispensation is a heavenly people. They like to call it heavenly obedience rather than new covenant obedience. It really doesn't matter to me what you call it, if you understand what we're talking about.

It's not some condition of our union with the Lord. Obeying the Lord is a fruit of our union with the Lord. It's a byproduct of our union with the Lord.

Let me set before your hearts, in simplicity, what I'd like to share this afternoon and tomorrow. This afternoon, I want to show an example. I'm big on pictures.

It makes it easier. Bible pictures. I want to show an example in the Bible of what it means to obey by grace.

And then tomorrow, Lord willing, I want to take another Bible story and show you what it means to obey by faith. Supernatural obedience. When God the Holy Spirit gave us this precious book, He wrote it in such a way that the Old Testament gives us the truth in a seed.

It's the same truth. It's just in a seed. And then the New Testament, by God's grace, unfolds that truth.

There's no difference. The Old Testament is the New Testament. One's in seed form.

One's in fully developed form. The Old Testament is pictures. It's redemptive history.

It's stories. Once upon a time... See, that's easier for me. I like those stories.

We need both. We need the truth in story form, and we need the truth in fully developed form. Now, the truth I want to share this afternoon, I could just take you to the New Testament.

To John chapter 16, verses 7 to 11. And look at the truth in fully developed form. The command we're going to look at is one of the greatest commands He's ever given.

We call it the Great Commission. And our Lord Jesus told us, when the Holy Spirit came into our lives, how the Lord would become the missionary through us, and reach out, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And we could spend our time looking at that.

That's fully developed form. But what I'd like to do is give you John 16, 7 to 11 in a picture. In a story from the Old Testament, and may God help us to see it.

God has a heart for the world. He has always had a heart for the world. God has a desire expressed in the command we call the Great Commission.

And what I'd like to do is give you a picture. A picture made up of pictures. There's three parts to this picture.

And in order to see the big picture, I'd like us to break it down and look at this picture, and then this picture, and then this picture, and then put them together, and then I pray that we'll have the revelation of the Lord. Part one of the picture is Noah. Noah the man.

Part two of the picture is the ark that Noah built, the boat. Part three of the picture is the animals, and the birds, and the bugs that were inside of the boat. The man, the ark, and the animals.

To save time, let me tell you what I think each represents, and then we'll try to put it together. Noah, I believe, is a picture of the believer. You're Noah.

I'm Noah. The one that found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The ark, I believe, is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

And the animals, I believe, are God's picture of those that come into the ark and find shelter in the ark, the elect, the church. I'm not going to take a lot of time to prove those things. If you don't agree with that, at least humor me this afternoon.

Just for this afternoon, agree with it. Noah is a picture of the believer. His name means rest.

He's the first one in the Bible ever to be called righteous. And Hebrews 11, verse 7 says, it's the righteousness which is according to faith. He's the sinner that found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis chapter 6, verse 9, like Enoch, Noah walked with God. And for this afternoon, he's just the believer that knows the Lord, that has walked with the Lord, that has seen the Lord every Christmas. Also, I don't think I need to take much time to prove to you that the ark is a glorious picture of our Savior, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the only Savior. One ark. One door.

One window. One Savior. And He's the perfect Savior.

Some of you may have studied about the ark and the words that are used and how it was covered with pitch, and how pitch is the same word for atonement, and how that whole ark was covered with atonement. And the all-sufficient Savior, the One that took the brunt of the storm, the One who secured everyone inside. The only Savior, the perfect Savior, the sufficient Savior.

You can trace in the story of Noah's ark, how those that were in the ark shared the destiny of the ark. The ark was just in the shape of a box, of a great chest, of a coffin. And the ark died, and those that were in the ark died, and shared the identity of the ark.

And then the ark began to rise, and those that were in the ark rose, when the ark rose. And then the ark rested, and those that were in the ark rested, when the ark rested. Glorious picture of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The third part of the picture is the animals. Let me tell you why I think that's a picture of the church, beside the fact that there might be some likenesses between a zoo and a church. Acts chapter 10.

You want to turn there, or else just listen as I read. Acts 10, beginning at verse 10. This is the vision that Peter had on the housetop in Joppa.

In the sixth hour, he went up to pray on the housetop. Beginning at verse 10, he became hungry. He was desiring to eat.

And while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance. And he saw the sky open, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground. And there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals, and crawling creatures of the earth, and birds of the air.

And a voice came to him, Get up, Peter. Kill and eat. And Peter said, By no means, Lord.

Never have I eaten anything unholy and unclean. And a voice came to him a second time. What God has cleansed, do not call or consider unholy.

This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. Now, Peter had a vision of four-footed animals, and birds of the air, and creeping things that crawl. Exactly what's mentioned that Noah had in the ark.

If in the New Testament, the animals are a picture of the Jews and the Gentiles, and those that finally come, and clearly Acts chapter 10 and verse 28 identifies the animals with people. If it's people in the New Testament, maybe it's people in the Old Testament. It certainly is this afternoon.

Bear with me. I say there are other likenesses as well. In seed form, before it's developed, the church is certainly like a zoo.

And perhaps you have noticed that there may be some believers that squawk, and some that growl, and some that peck, and some that bug you, and so on. Anyway, those are the three parts. Noah is the believer.

The ark is a picture of our Savior, the perfect salvation. The animals, a picture of those that come into Him for safety. Now, if you'll turn to Hebrews 11, please.

Those are the three parts of the picture. But if you have just the three parts, I think you're going to miss the heart of the Lord. It's when those three parts are put together that you see the vision of the Lord in the heart of the Lord.

Hebrews 11, verse 7, please. By faith, Noah, being warned by God about things not seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. The ark, the man, the ark, the animals.

Three parts. Now let's put the parts together, and may God give us His heart, His picture. If you take the man and you connect it to the ark, it begins with this wonderful revelation.

According to Genesis, Noah is now 480 years old. And he receives a revelation. He receives a vision from heaven.

He receives a communication from God, being warned by God about things not seen. And Noah is now informed, is illumined by the Lord undoubtedly about the judgment to come, about the sinfulness of man, about the stern necessity of God's holy character to do something. And then God begins to tell him about the ark, about his salvation.

In simple words, when Noah received God's revelation of the ark, Noah received God's revelation of the Lord Jesus. That was his vision. He beheld by God's light the ark of God.

Now remember, at that time, Noah was the only one that found grace in the eyes of the Lord. When God showed him all those things, nobody else saw it. They were only for his eyes.

No one heard what Noah heard. No one saw what Noah saw. No one experienced what Noah experienced.

That vision, that revelation, it was all on the inside. It was in his mind. It was in his heart.

It was in his spirit. God showed him all of this, but it was deep inside his inner man. And all he could do was hold it inside.

And he knew something no one else knew. God had given him a revelation. And I'm certain that that revelation that he saw included everything.

The rain, the flood, the ark, the animals, all of it was given to him. That's how it always begins. A man and a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second connection between Noah and the ark, not only did he receive a revelation of that ark, but the revelation of that ark absolutely transformed his life. God promised that He would be patient and give the world 120 years before He judged. How do you think Noah spent that 120 years? See, we're not left to guess.

We're not left to wonder. 1 Peter 3, verse 20 tells us He spent that 120 years in the construction of the ark. And while everyone around him was marrying and giving in marriage and planting and sowing and reaping and harvesting, when they were pulling stumps and plowing the field, when they were buying and selling, Noah was ark building.

From morning to night, he was ark building. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, he was occupied with the ark. He ate the ark.

He drank the ark. He slept the ark. The ark was his life.

It was his work. It was his mission. It was his hobby.

It was his entertainment. It was his everything. All of his energy was spent on the ark.

He was ark conscious. If you looked for Noah and you wanted to know where he was, you would find him very easily. He's out there working on the ark.

Always on the ark. And even though Noah lived another 229 years after the flood, he's always connected with the ark. Ask any Sunday school child, what comes to your mind when I say Noah? And they're going to say Noah and the ark.

Noah and the flood. Noah and the animals. That's Noah's life.

He saw the Lord and he was transformed by the revelation of the Lord. Total occupation with the ark. Now don't lose the truth by the scenery.

The ark is our Lord Jesus. God's revelation of Himself to Noah as an ark. It's not just a boat builder.

That's His salvation. That's His best friend that He's occupied with. God had revealed to Him in picture form His salvation.

When I say that Noah was totally consumed by the ark, what I mean in principle is that here was a believer who by revelation was given a vision of the Lord. And that vision totally consumed his life. One more connection between the man and the ark.

Not only did he get a revelation of the Lord, not only did that revelation take over his life and consume him so that he was occupied day and night with that revelation. But look again at Hebrews 11.7 please. It says, He prepared an ark by which He condemned the world.

That was His ministry. You say, well, didn't Noah ever preach to his neighbors? Well, undoubtedly he did. II Peter 2.5 calls Noah a preacher of righteousness.

Evidently, as he built, he shared. As he built, he testified. As he built, he talked.

But it's not an accident, brothers and sisters in Christ, that God the Holy Spirit has not recorded one sermon of Noah. In fact, you go a long way to even find one word that Noah even said. The first time he spoke, it was when he gave a curse to his own son and grandson after the flood.

God doesn't record His words because though He spoke, that wasn't His great testimony. You say, didn't Noah pray for his neighbors? Undoubtedly he did. Ezekiel the prophet many years later said in Ezekiel 14, Though Noah and Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, says Jehovah, I would not spare it, not for their righteousness.

These were righteous men. They were intercessors. And there's no doubt in my mind that Noah prayed, but that wasn't his testimony.

According to the Bible, the power of Noah's life was ark building. By that, he condemned the world. He didn't stop ark building to witness.

He didn't stop ark building to pray. Hebrews 11, 7, By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household by which he condemned the world. The Noah.

Noah is the Christian and the ark is Christ. If that's so, what does it mean to build the ark? How do we build Christ? You say, Christ builds us. But how do we build Christ? Let me suggest what I think God is illustrating here.

When Noah first got the word from the Lord and God revealed to him, that whole vision of the ark was in Noah's heart. But the neighbors couldn't see that. Noah knew that it would be 477 feet long, but his neighbors couldn't see that.

Noah knew that it would be 79 feet wide, but his neighbors couldn't see that. Noah knew that it would be 47 feet high and three stories high, but his neighbors couldn't see that. Noah knew all about the covering and the nesting places inside the ark.

It was Noah's vision. It was in his heart. It was a secret to Noah.

Then by God's grace, Noah began to build the ark. And the vision that God put within became manifest to his neighbors. And as they watched out the window, that which was on the inside gradually, week after week, month after month, began to take form.

And as they looked, they began to see the vision he had. He had it inside. He made it public.

He put it outside. And then they began to see the Christ that God had showed him by revelation. His neighbors, family, his acquaintances, his friends, they knew that this man had pinned all his hopes on that

revelation, on that which pictured the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, that's the first part. Noah and the ark, a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, a transformation by that revelation through occupation with that revelation, and finally, a manifestation of that revelation to those around. That's parts 1 and 2 of the picture.

But there's a third part. Let's try to relate that. To catch the wonder of this, you might want to turn to Genesis with me, please.

Genesis chapter 6. Noah gets two commands from God. I'm going to call the first command the Great Commission. Of course, it's seed form.

It's Old Testament. It's the picture. But you'll see it's the same thing.

Genesis chapter 6, verse 19. Of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark. Keep them alive with you.

They shall be male and female. Verse 20. Of the birds after their kind, of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.

As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible and gather it to yourself. It shall be food for both you and them. Genesis chapter 7, verse 2. You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and a female.

And of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and a female. Also the birds of the sky by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of the earth. Brothers and sisters, don't read that la, la, la.

We come to the Scriptures and we just read it la, la, la. This was a commission. This was a Great Commission.

Take the animals, gather them, go get them. Two of every kind, seven of every kind. Now this part's not in your Bible.

And Noah said, what? See, that's not in your Bible. Gather animals, gather bugs by twos and sevens, clean and unclean. Why don't you tell me to reach to the sky? I can't reach it.

It's across the sea. I can't do that. We just sort of read this.

What a commission it was. What's he supposed to do? Get ropes and nets and a whip and a chair and butterfly nets? How's he going to do this? And I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us what went through his mind when he got that Great Commission.

Go out, get them in, bring them in. But we know God spoke again and gave another command. Now he's got two commands.

This is in Genesis chapter 7, verse 1. And the Lord said to Noah, Enter the ark, you and your household. For you alone I have seen to be righteous before me in this time. Verse 4. After seven more days I'll send rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights.

I'll blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I've made. And Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, did you catch the wonder of that? Go out and

get them by twos and by sevens.

Go get them. Get in the ark. Seven days before the flood came, Noah and his family were commanded to get in the ark.

And again, don't read it, la, la, la. It's not only seven days before the flood came. It's seven days before Noah obeyed the Great Commission.

He didn't gather one goat. He didn't gather one dog. He didn't gather one cat.

He didn't gather any animals. And now he's got two commands. Go get them.

Bring them in. Get in the ark. And abide in the ark.

And you know the record. Glorious, glorious record. Noah and his family got inside the ark.

That which pictures Christ. And when they got inside the ark, one of the greatest miracles of all time took place. You're familiar with it.

Chapter 7, verse 13. And on the very same day that Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark, they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after its kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. So they went into the ark to Noah by twos of all flesh, in which was the breath of life.

Those that entered male and female of all flesh entered as God had commanded. Mighty miracle of migration. When Noah entered the ark and began to abide in the Lord, God began to draw the animals.

And they came by twos and by seven. Not a herd of sheep and a herd of oxen. Just seven coming up the plank.

Just seven. This is glorious. And two camels came and seven antelopes and two rabbits and two pigs and seven deer.

Marvelous to behold. And Noah's on the inside. And he's seeing his command being fulfilled supernaturally.

God said, go get them. Abide in the ark. And as he abode in the ark, as he was abiding in that which pictured Christ, God began to draw them.

And He drew them into the ark. It's one thing to see the clean birds flying in and the unclean birds flying in and the animals. But we're also talking about creeping things.

Can you picture that? Two beetles and seven grasshoppers and seven locusts and two moles. And they're just coming by a mighty miracle of God. Brothers and sisters in Christ, that's evangelism and nothing else is.

That's soul winning. A man who has a revelation of Christ and becomes so occupied with that revelation of Christ that it transforms his life. And there's a manifestation of Christ that the neighbors begin to see it in the glorious day when God dawns on him to abide in Christ.

And as he does, that which God commanded is fulfilled. And God is the one who does it. Glorious, wonderful picture.

I heard that Noah was probably the worst evangelist that ever lived. Because after 120 years, what did he have to show for it? Only his family. He's probably one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived.

Not only because that which represented the entire church was there in the ark, but because God used Noah to give us the secret of missions. And not only the secret of missions, the secret of obedience, the secret of the Christian life. How am I going to obey God? Abide in Christ and watch it happen.

Oh, it's a glorious, glorious thing. You don't obey the Lord by obeying the Lord. You obey the Lord by abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can fake the obedience, but you can't fake the delight. I delight to do thy will, oh my God. He's got to work that inside.

I'm not saying Noah didn't preach. I'm not saying Noah didn't pray. But I am suggesting that the power of his life, his ministry, was in ark building.

It was in connection with the ark. It's an amazing thing to abide in the Lord. For years in my Christian life, I did it the other way.

Before God began to dawn on me, I'd ramrodded the gospel down all my relatives' throats and everybody I met. I went out with a chair and a whip. And I said, God loves you.

Come into the kingdom. And one day, God began to dawn on my heart by His grace what it meant to go after His Son. The best thing you can do for your unsaved family member, the best thing you can do for your unsaved neighbor is delight yourself in the Lord.

And if you delight yourself in the Lord, He'll give you the desires of your heart. It's a glorious thing to abide in Christ and to watch it happen. Now, the New Testament develops that when the Holy Spirit comes into your life, He will convict the world through you of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Of sin, because they believe not. You'll live by faith, they'll be convicted of unbelief. You'll embrace the righteousness of Christ.

And they'll be convicted of their own self-righteousness of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged in your life. They'll see you having victory over sin. They know nothing of that.

It's the same truth how God reaches, but it's illustrated so beautifully in the life of Noah. As I close, let me look once more at the picture and try to illustrate what happens. When the picture begins, it's just a man with a revelation, but it's all on the inside.

I've seen the Lord. He's revealed Himself. I know His Son.

I see the dimensions. It's all on the inside. And as the neighbors look, all they see is the Christian.

And sometimes it's not all that consistent. But then as time goes on, Noah begins to build the ark, and the vision that was internal becomes external. And now they see the man and the ark.

First they only saw the man, and now they see the man and the ark. And then comes the day when the man gets in the ark, and all they see is the ark. And when all they see is the ark, the miracle begins, and God begins to draw them.

Oh, that's missions. The man and the Lord. Just the Lord.

Supernatural obedience. Don't say it's up in heaven. Don't say it's across the sea.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it's in your mouth. It's in your heart. It's the Word of Faith which we preach.

The illustration is the Great Commission. That's only the illustration. It's true of every command.

Everything God's ever commanded you to do is not possible for you to do. Only He can do it. You haven't begun to love your wife until you've abided in the ark and watched God draw her.

That's obedience. You can't count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations. Not without a miracle.

You can't turn the other cheek. You can't go the second mile. Not without a miracle.

But He's promised the miracle. Obedience by the grace of God. Obedience by abiding in Christ.

Here is the man who saw the Lord. Here is the man who allowed that vision to transform his life. Here is the man who manifest that vision to others.

And one day, by the good grace of God, that man disappeared inside the Lord Himself. And all they saw was the Lord. That's when they'll come from the swamps and from the woods and from the ghettos and from every neighborhood.

That's when they'll begin to come. May God help us to learn how to walk in obedience. Not by trying harder, but by the mighty miracle.

By faith in the great object of our faith, the Lord Jesus Himself. He's the one. And as we abide in Him, He does His miracle.

I read this statement from an old writer. If you will provide what you command, then command what you will. Exactly so.

He provides what He commands. You claim the promises of God? Claim the commands of God. Because every command is a promise.

And He's promised to do what He's called you to do. Let's bow, please, before the Lord. Father, we thank You for this wonderful illustration.

A man who has seen the Lord and was transformed by that revelation. And allowed that revelation to manifest itself to the world. And how You, by that miracle, drew the world unto Yourself.

Such a simple picture. Teach us how to abide in the Lord Jesus. How to obey by grace.

Thank You in advance that You're going to work this in our hearts. Because we claim it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.

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