

Salvation and Recreation pt 3 - The purpose of salvation: obedience

Introduction

A. This morning we are continuing our mini-series on Genesis 6-9 considering the truths of the flood and how they point us to Christ - we are going to cover four main topics as we go through the story of the flood

1. Sin and judgment
2. Salvation and re-creation
3. Covenant and promise
4. Continuing necessity

B. Review

1. We started the flood account three weeks ago and examined three truths about sin and four truths about God's judgment
2. Two weeks ago we started the second section by looking at salvation and re-creation and saw how the plan of salvation is typed in the flood and points us to the work of Christ
3. Last week we continued looking at salvation and re-creation and saw how the purpose of salvation is also typed in the flood and calls us to live out these purposes in our lives as well
 - a. Salvation is for demonstrating the faithfulness of God and this calls us to faith
 - b. Salvation is for delivering us from the wrath of God and this calls us to magnify God's grace
 - c. Salvation is for making a distinction and this calls us to live distinct lives
 - d. Salvation is for re-creation and this calls us to seek the Spirit's power in our lives for re-creation

C. I promised last week that we had one more purpose of salvation to cover this morning: obedience

1. As we look at the flood account, the one thing that stands out above everything else is Noah's obedience
 - a. Two weeks ago we considered how Noah's obedience pointed us to Christ's obedience that He performed on our behalf
 - b. But, Noah's obedience does not only point to Christ's obedience but also calls us to obedience so the flood account demonstrates that salvation is for obedience
2. I said last week that I think obedience is almost a capstone purpose of salvation because it is the culmination of my other four purposes of salvation
 - a. Faith is demonstrated in obedience - Romans 1:5 - *through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,*
 - b. Deliverance from the wrath of God is demonstrated in obedience - Ephesians 5:6-7 - *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*
 - c. Our distinction is demonstrated in obedience - I John 3:10 - *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*
 - d. A new creation is demonstrated in obedience - Ephesians 4:23 - *and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*
3. So, this morning I want to carefully consider this last purpose of salvation
 - a. I dedicated a whole sermon to this for two reasons
 - b. First, I think it is a capstone purpose of salvation and I will try to demonstrate this across Scripture
 - c. But also, it is one of the most disputed purposes of salvation among Christians
 - i. Is it necessary or just recommended for Christians to obey?
 - ii. Even if we agree on necessity, what are Christians to obey?
 - iii. How are Christians to obey?
 - d. So, I think it is useful to slow down and consider these questions carefully according to Scripture

D. Proposition and Outline

1. Proposition - If the flood is a type par excellence of the judgment of sin, then Noah and the Ark are a type par excellence of salvation in Christ. Therefore, like Noah, we must obey God's commands in Christ.
2. Outline
 - a. Salvation is for obedience
 - b. Do Christians have to obey?
 - c. Why do Christians obey?
 - d. What do Christians obey? (also who)
 - e. How do Christians obey?
 - f. Applications

I. Salvation is for obedience (6:9, 22, 7:5, 7-9, 15-16)

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. - Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. - And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

A. Why do I think that Noah's obedience is not only a type of Christ but also an example for us?

1. The main reason that I think Noah's obedience is both is because I see both in the New Testament
 - a. We already looked at the clear ways Noah's obedience is a type of Christ's obedience and I think there can be no argument there
 - b. So, where do I see Noah's obedience pointing to our obedience in the New Testament - one really important reference
 - i. Hebrews 11:7 - *By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*
 - ii. In Hebrews 11, the author of Hebrews is calling us to have faith like all of these examples
 - iii. As the author of Hebrews upholds Noah's faith he points to Noah's obedience
 - iv. Noah's faith caused him to obey and build the Ark and we are called to imitate this faith
 - v. So, Noah's obedience is an example to us - Noah obeyed and built the Ark, we also must live out our faith in obedience
 - c. We also see the corollary in Scripture - those who did not obey in the flood account are negative examples for us
 - i. I Peter 3:18-20 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.*
 - ii. Peter refers to the rest of the world in the flood account as those who did not obey and then says that this is still the distinction between the world and the Christian
 - iii. The Christian is the one who obeys and the world are those who do not obey
 - d. So, twice we see the obedience of Noah or the disobedience of the world held up as examples for us
2. This shouldn't surprise us, because Christ's obedience is not only for us but is also an example to us
 - a. I Peter 2:21 - *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*
 - b. Philippians 2:5-8, 12 - *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross... Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*
 - c. Hebrews 5:8-9 - *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*
 - d. If Noah's obedience is a type of Christ, then like Christ's obedience it is an example for us to follow
 - e. Noah's obedience is a type of Christ and an example because Christ's obedience is both on our behalf and an example for us to follow

B. So, I think we should clearly see from the flood account that salvation is for obedience

1. God chose to save Noah
2. God gave His grace to Noah
3. God called Noah righteous
4. Therefore Noah obeyed and was saved from the flood

II. Do we have to obey? - New Testament reflection on this truth

A. The purpose of salvation is obedience

1. Romans 1:5 - *through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,*
2. Romans 15:18 - *For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience*
3. Romans 16:26 - *according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith*
4. I Peter 1:1-2 - *To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood*

B. So obedience is a mark of a Christian

1. I John 2:1-6 - *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*
2. I John 5:2-5 - *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*
3. II Corinthians 10:5-6 - *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*
4. Romans 6:17-18 - *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*

C. Obedience is such an important mark of a Christian that it is listed as a requirement of salvation

1. Hebrews 5:9 - *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*
2. It is those who obey who will be saved!

D. And, on the flip side, lack of obedience is lack of salvation

1. John 3:36 - *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
2. II Thessalonians 1:8 - *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*
3. I Peter 2:8 - *They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*
4. I Peter 4:17 - *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

E. So the saints are defined as those who keep the commandments of God

1. Revelation 14:12 - *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*

F. Based on the clear teaching of the New Testament, the answer to the question is Yes! Christians must obey!

1. An obedient Christian demonstrates that he or she is truly saved
2. A disobedient Christian demonstrates that he or she really has no part of Christ
3. So, we must obey - there is no room in Scripture for a Christian who prayed a prayer once and then lives in callous disregard of the commands of God
4. In recent years, this teaching has taken the name of Lordship Salvation - a term advanced by John MacArthur - those who are saved will acknowledge Jesus Christ as their sovereign Lord
5. And, in recent years, this teaching, Lordship Salvation, has been widely disparaged in the greater 'Christian' community - but Scripture doesn't allow for this - those who are saved are saved for the purpose of obedience - we will acknowledge Christ as our Lord and therefore will submit in obedience to Him

III. Why do we obey? - Do we obey to earn salvation?

A. How did Noah's obedience relate to his salvation?

1. Noah's obedience came after God proclaimed grace to him
 - a. We've already considered this, but remember that the first declaration about Noah is grace
 - b. Genesis 6:8 - *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*
 - c. So, Noah's obedience did not earn him grace from God, it did not earn him favor
 - d. Instead his obedience followed grace, God's favor preceded Noah's obedience
2. Noah's obedience came after he was declared righteous
 - a. Also, in the flood account we see that Noah is called righteous before his hallmark obedience happens in the passage - Genesis 6:9 - *These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.*
 - b. So, before Noah obeyed and built the Ark, he was already considered righteous by God
 - c. So, Noah's obedience did not earn righteous standing - standing was given by God before obedience
3. Noah's obedience came before he was finally saved
 - a. Noah's obedience comes in Genesis 6:22 - *Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.*
 - b. This comes significantly before the flood comes and wipes out the ungodly world in Genesis 7:11 - *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.*
4. So, my conclusion from Noah's life is that His obedience did not, in any way, earn his salvation, but was absolutely necessary for his salvation
 - a. God's grace and Noah's righteous standing were the basis of his salvation
 - b. But, Noah's obedience was necessary for salvation - if Noah didn't build the Ark, he wouldn't be saved

B. Obedience is from righteousness not for righteousness but is still necessary for salvation

1. I make this point because 1) it is Scriptural, but also 2) because the Scriptural statement is often twisted to make unscriptural conclusions
 - a. A doctrine of the reformation is that salvation is not by works but grace - and this is gloriously true
 - i. Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*
 - ii. Titus 3:4-5 - *But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*
 - b. But many people today would take this doctrine and say that I am contradicting it - those who proclaim we must obey are claiming that salvation is based on works
 - i. I want to carefully deal with this question - can we proclaim obedience is necessary for salvation without saying that obedience is the basis of salvation? Obviously, I think the answer is yes.
2. Obedience is a required mark not a efficacious requirement of salvation
 - a. In other words, just like for Noah, without obedience there is no salvation - it is a required mark
 - b. But, also like Noah, obedience is not the basis of salvation - it is not an efficacious requirement

C. An example: Does exhaust run an engine?

1. Let's say that you put a car in a room that I cannot get into, see into or hear out of but, you leave the tail pipe sticking out of the room - how can I tell if the car is on or not?
 - a. One way I could tell is to examine what is coming out of the tail pipe - if the car is running, there should be warm CO₂ coming out of the tail pipe - I could analyze the exhaust to see if the car is running
 - b. Now, you could try to trick me and buy a tank of CO₂ gas and hook that up to the tailpipe inside the room that I cannot see into - and you might mess up my reading
 - c. But, if you hook CO₂ up to the tailpipe, you haven't turned the car on, you've just tricked everyone
 - d. So, if there is no CO₂ in the exhaust, I can be pretty sure that the car is not on - it is a really good mark of the engine running
 - e. But, CO₂ can't make the engine run - you can pump a bunch of CO₂ through the car and you could even trick me, but you haven't turned the engine on
2. Your heart is like that car engine, regeneration is like turning the engine on and CO₂ is like obedience
 - a. We see that obedience always flows out of the regenerated heart like CO₂ flows out of the engine, so it is a really good marker for salvation - if there is no obedience there is no salvation - in this way obedience is required for salvation
 - b. But, at the same time, obedience cannot cause salvation - you can try to pump your life full of external obedience and you can even trick me about the status of your heart, but no matter how much CO₂ you pump into your engine, it will never run
3. So, let's hold up both sides of the doctrine
 - a. Salvation is by grace through faith apart from works - rejoice in that, proclaim it clearly and loudly
 - b. But proclaim this also: without works, without obedience there is no salvation

IV. What do we obey?

A. What did Noah obey? The word of God (Genesis 6:13-16, 22)

And God said to Noah... " Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks... Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

1. As we look at the Genesis account, what Noah obeyed started with Who Noah obeyed - God commanded Noah and Noah obeyed
2. Then what Noah obeyed was the word of God to him - God gave him a set of instructions and Noah did all that God commanded him

B. So, 'What do we obey?' must start first with 'Who do we obey?'

1. Noah's obedience was focused on who did Noah obey - Noah obeyed God and not the world around him
 - a. So, as we consider obedience, we must ask who we are to obey as well - Scripture's answer is clear
2. John 14:21-24 - *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."* Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.
3. John 15:10 - *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
4. Galatians 6:2 - *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*
5. Like Noah, our obedience must be to God through His Word - which has been more fully manifested to us in Christ - the Word of God who is God Himself
6. Our obedience must be to Christ - it is whoever has Christ's commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Christ - it is the law of Christ that we are called to fulfill
7. So, in our discussion and even perhaps in disagreement, let us not lose sight of this truth - whatever we are called to obey, we are called to obey Christ
8. So, if you are convinced in your spirit according to the Word of God that Christ is calling you to obedience in something, then obey it

C. 'What do we obey?' then continues with 'What has Christ commanded of us?'

1. There could be many ways that we could go about answering this question, and I think the way you go about answering this question greatly affects the way that you answer it - I think this is why this is another area where Christians have much disagreement
2. I do not have any false expectation that I am going to resolve a centuries old debate here this morning and after the message some of you may still disagree with me, and that's ok - make sure you are obeying Christ as I have just called us to
3. But, as your elder I have tried to put in some careful thought and would like to share my exposition with you for your edification either in agreement or disagreement
4. My desire is to start from statements in the New Testament - the apostolic writings - to see what they understood obedience to be
 - a. II Timothy 1:13 - *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*
 - b. II Timothy 2:1-2 - *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*
 - c. Philippians 4:9 - *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me---practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*
 - d. I Thessalonians 4:1-3 - *Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification*
 - e. The apostles clearly regarded their teaching as the basis of godliness, the basis of obedience - so to learn what Christ has called us to, we should study the apostles writings

D. Christ desires for us not to participate in unrepentant sin

1. I John 3:4-10 - *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*
2. To some degree we all know what sin is, at least we are aware of sin in our lives even if we aren't aware of every sin in our lives - so, the first command of Christ is to depart from sin that you can see
3. And, to be helpful, the apostles point out many clear sins that we should be forsaking, for example:
4. Colossians 3:5-10 - *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*
5. So, Christ commands you to depart from sin - when you are convicted that something is a sin or you read in Scripture that something is a sin, turn away from it - do not continue on in the same path - this is the first step of obedience and rejecting this is rejecting all obedience

E. Christ desires for us to conform our lives to the apostolic teaching

1. Apostolic teaching is full of positive commands as well. For example:
2. Colossian 3:12-4:6 - *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison--- that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*
3. If you want to know what Christ positively wants you to do, start with the clear passages - meditate on these commandments - work on enacting them in your lives
4. As I look at the apostolic teaching, though, I want to point out one thing - the apostolic teaching is full of attitudes and affections that we should have (Colossians 3 - compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness)
 - a. There are both attitudes and actions in the epistles, but the attitudes far outweigh the explicitly commanded actions in the New Testament - I am convinced that this is because the attitudes and affections are the more primary area of obedience for the New Testament believer
 - b. I'm not saying that the actions are not also to be obeyed, but the actions naturally flow out of the attitudes and affections that are commanded - if you are not obeying the actions in the epistles, you are demonstrating that you do not have the attitudes and affections commanded in the epistles
 - c. But I'm saying that attitudes and affections are more basic because it can be easy to gauge our obedience based on our actions, what can we do to obey - and this is good in some ways
 - d. But, we must be careful not to get caught up in just doing the actions and miss all the attitudes and affections that are behind them - the actions must flow out of the attitudes and affections or they are, in fact, not obedience

F. Conforming our lives to the apostolic teaching must work itself out in love

1. I John 2:7-11 - *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*
2. I John 3:10 - *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*
3. Galatians 5:13-15 - *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*
4. I Peter 1:22-23 - *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;*

G. On the other hand, conforming our lives to the apostolic teaching must not work itself out in ARGUING over the Old Testament Law

1. Why do I bring this up?
 - a. If we are going to talk about obedience, another area of contention among believers is what to do with the Old Testament Law.
 - b. So, I want to address this area briefly, but as I do it, I ask all of you not to jump to conclusions about what I am saying
2. When our lives are marked by obedient love, we are already fulfilling the heart of the Old Testament law
 1. Mark 12:28-31 - *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
 2. Romans 13:8-10 - *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*
 3. So, the first conclusion I make is that if we focus on the New Testament commands and do them in a way that exudes love to our brothers and sisters in Christ we have already fulfilled the Old Testament Law
3. SOMETIMES the apostles make a distinction between their instructions and merely external obedience to the Old Testament Law
 - a. Romans 7:4-6 - *Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*
 - b. Now, I don't want to draw too many conclusions from this statement - sometimes the apostles make a distinction between obedience to their commands and obedience to the law
 - c. There are many questions we could ask about this and many of us may come to different answers - and I think all of us are prone to go to far one way or another as we try to answer these questions - but my goal is not to focus on that right now
 - d. I just want to point out that sometimes there is a distinction so what we obey cannot be exactly synonymous with the Old Testament Law
 - e. Because of these places in the New Testament that make a distinction, how we interact with the Old Testament law can be very confusing for the believer

4. So what do I want you to do with the Old Testament Law? Obey and not argue with each other about it
 - a. My desire in this point is not to condemn anyone who believes one thing or another about the Old Testament law nor is my purpose to discount the value of the Old Testament law to the believer - in fact, I want to uphold its value to the believer
 - i. The Old Testament is God's Word, fully inspired by Him, and so it deserves and requires the same level as obedience as the New Testament
 - ii. But what it means to obey the Old Testament under the New Covenant can get very complicated
 - iii. There are several different positions about what to do with the Old Testament law and I definitely have my own understanding of it that I hope is in accordance with Scripture
 - iv. But, I think many positions, even those different than mine, are held by godly men who truly want to be in obedience to Scripture and that is a good thing
 - v. So, we should learn how to submit to the Old Testament law - this requires patient study, meditation, and prayer through both the Old and New Testaments and a desire for the Spirit of God to convict us about these things
 - b. But the Old Testament law is less clear and has been clarified in Christ - so arguing about what is less clear instead of pursuing wholeheartedly what is clear is not worth it
 - i. Titus 3:8-9 - *This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*
 - ii. Colossians 2:16-17 - *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*
 - iii. Romans 14:1-12 - *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*
 - c. So, Scripture clearly calls us not to argue about it and not to make it our focus - instead focus on the New Testament exposition of that law - there are plenty of commandments in the New Testament to work on obeying that you will never lack something to be convicted of
 - i. Again, I don't mean by this that you should ignore the Old Testament - study and obey it in light of New Testament teaching and according to the Spirit's conviction
 - ii. If you are convicted by something in the Old Testament - by all means obey it!
 - iii. But, don't get carried away by the Old Testament law so that it becomes a point of contention between you and other believers and overshadows the clear teachings of the New Testament

5. When we have disagreements about the Old Testament law, what should we do?
 - a. Outdo one another in showing honor
 - i. Romans 14:13-23 - *Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*
 - ii. In other words, instead of arguing about the Old Testament law, instead let us honor each other even if we have differences about the Old Testament law
 - iii. Even when we disagree about what the Old Testament is calling us to, we can strive not to judge each other or to cause each other to stumble in our differing understandings
 - b. Encourage one another to love and good works
 - i. Hebrews 10:24 - *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*
 - ii. Titus 3:8-9 - *This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*
 - iii. So, just because we disagree about the Old Testament law, we can still encourage each other and hold each other accountable to the New Testament standards
 - iv. I'm not calling for us to have no influence on each other, but rather let us focus our influence on each other according to the clear New Testament commands

H. It should not be surprising that obedience in the New Covenant has more to do with attitudes of the heart that spill out into actions than conformity to an external law because this is exactly what was promised in the Old Testament about the New Covenant

1. Jeremiah 31:31-34 - *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*
2. Ezekiel 11:19-21 - *And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD."*

V. How do we obey?

A. The New Testament clearly calls us to obey from the heart

1. Romans 6:17 - *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,*
2. II Corinthians 5:12 - *We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.*
3. Luke 6:45 - *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

B. Obeying from the heart can be contrasted to two words that are often, perhaps too often, thrown around

1. As soon as we talk about obedience, two words will come to the forefront almost automatically - legalism and licentiousness
 - a. This is somewhat unfortunate because these words are often lobbed at those we disagree with without careful definition or clear reason
 - b. In other words, they just become debate enders, if I don't like what you are saying I can just call you a legalist or I can call you licentious and just expect that you have to stop
 - c. But, I want to address these topics for two reasons - because they do come up so we should be able to think through them carefully and also because they are real dangers even when they are usually used improperly
 - d. So, I will start by trying to give careful definitions of what I think legalism and licentiousness are
2. Licentiousness
 - a. Licentiousness is not having a heart that wants to obey and therefore does not obey. It is a heart that rejects submission and therefore throws off all restraint. It is a heart that loves pleasure rather than God.
 - b. It is not when someone does not understand the Bible to command something.
 - c. Someone who in good faith understands that the Bible does not forbid something that you understand it to forbid is not automatically licentious.
 - d. It is a matter of the heart - are they wanting to obey and are they trying to live that out in their life.
3. Legalism
 - a. Legalism is not having a heart that wants to obey but wants everyone else to think it obeys. It is a heart that cares only about external appearances rather than internal realities. It is a heart that relishes in performing some of the actions commanded in the Bible while ignoring all of the heart attitudes commanded in the Bible. It is a heart that loves pride rather than God.
 - b. It is not when someone feels a deep conviction to obey what the Bible says.
 - c. Someone who in good faith understands that the Bible forbids or commands something that you do not is not automatically legalistic
 - d. Again, it is a matter of the heart - is their desire to obey coming from a heart of love to Christ? Is their obedience marked by all of the heart attitudes that are commanded in the New Testament?

C. Instead of being legalistic or licentious we must obey from the heart

1. If licentiousness and legalism are both primarily matters of the heart, then the answer to both errors is to obey from the heart
2. In other words, we care more about our attitudes and affections and how they display themselves in our actions than merely our external actions because this is how obedience is described in the New Testament
3. We care more about pleasing Christ than being better than others because our obedience is founded on a love for Christ not pride in ourselves
4. We care more about why a fellow believer does something than the mere fact they do something different than us because our obedience is worked out in love and not in pride

D. So, we should guard ourselves against both legalism and licentiousness and hesitate to label others

1. Legalism and licentiousness are real dangers and we must guard against them
 - a. As we examine our culture, probably the bigger danger in the wider picture is licentiousness, there appears to be very little desire to obey - so we must guard ourselves diligently against licentiousness so as not to be carried away with the world
 - b. But, in this church where I am preaching, I think we understand this danger well and we may be tempted to react against that with a form of route legalism - so, even though it is not the prevalent danger in the world around us we must guard ourselves against this as well -we must not react against licentiousness with legalism
 - c. So, we must guard against both dangers in our own heart - and the guard against legalism and licentiousness is the heart. We must make sure that our hearts love Christ and that our obedience is flowing from this love in our hearts and that therefore it is flowing out first in the attitudes and affections commanded in the New Testament. If this is true, we cannot be legalistic or licentious.

2. Again, if legalism and licentiousness are primarily matters of the heart we should be slow to label others
 - a. We can't infallibly see into others' hearts, so we can't know with any certainty that anyone else is being legalistic or licentious
 - b. So, we should be very careful before we slap these labels on people with disagree with
 - c. In fact, I think if you are prone to slapping these labels on people, this may be a symptom of a problem in your own heart.
 - d. If you are prone to calling others legalists when you don't agree with them, this may be a symptom of licentiousness in your own heart - you call them legalists so that you don't have to examine your own heart.
 - e. And, if you are prone to calling others licentious when you don't agree with them, this may be a symptom of legalism in your own heart - you call them licentious so that you don't have to examine your own heart.
- E. How do we obey? We obey from the heart and not from the surface. We obey out of a deep and abiding love for Christ.**

VI. Application

A. As I close this morning, I want to spend a moment calling for application of these truths

1. In reality most of this sermon has been application just by nature
2. But, I want to stop and pause and call us to not only hear these things, but to do these things

B. Two verses

1. Philippians 2:12-13 - *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
2. I Peter 1:14-16 - *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

C. We've talked for the last hour about obedience, its necessity and its focus - now I want you to examine your own hearts

1. Perhaps there are points you've disagreed with me on - don't disregard this topic because you disagree with me on a point here - instead search your own heart to see whether obedience is there
2. Perhaps you've been in great agreement with me on certain points - don't gloss over this topic because you agree with me - there is a real danger that we can start nodding our heads and not examine our hearts - instead search your own heart to see whether obedience is there

D. Close with some questions

1. Can you clearly see obedience that flows from the heart and manifests itself in the attitudes and affections of the New Testament in your life?
2. Can you see areas where obedience is lacking, where there are attitudes and affections that are not consistent with love for Christ?
3. Do you have an earnest desire to conquer these strongholds of disobedience in your life by the Spirit's power?
4. I hope the answer to all three questions is yes. I hope you can see obedience. I hope you can see areas for growth in obedience. I hope you have a desire to grow in obedience.
5. And to be clear, I am asking these questions about you, not someone else. I know it is easy to hear these questions and think of this person or that person who you think could work on these things. But I call you not to examine others, but to examine yourself.
6. So, I leave you with this - examine your heart, are you actively making Christ your sovereign Lord?
7. Is this great purpose of salvation evident in your life?

Philippians 2:12-13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.