



MORE OBEDIENCE

Pleasing God more means obeying God first

SUMMARY

We have become a very goal-oriented society, and, while that isn't a bad thing, we often fail to make the greatest purpose our greatest pursuit. With a myriad of options and opportunities, it is so easy for us to get distracted by and begin to drift towards things that aren't necessarily bad things, but they interfere with or take the place of what should be our greatest desire – to please God. This year, let's determine that our life is going to abound with and increase in those things that our Heavenly Father takes great delight in.

REVIEW

We began this series by establishing the theme for our church this year: **MORE AND MORE - DETERMINED TO PLEASE THE LORD MORE IN 2024.**

We want to abound and increase in the things that God takes great delight in. It's a journey marked by **INTENSITY, INTEGRITY, INTERACTION** (with the Father and the family of God), and **INVESTMENT**.

We've found that it is possible for God to be pleased, for us to know what pleases God, and for us to please God with our life.

With that foundation, we began to consider some key elements that need to be in our life if we are going to please God more.

The first element is **MORE TRUST**. Pleasing God more begins with trusting God most.

Last week, we found that the second element is **MORE DISCERNMENT**. Our key statement was this: **PLEASING GOD MORE MEANS LIVING RIGHT IN A WORLD THAT IS WRONG**.

Once sin invaded the heart of man and the world of man, sin impacted the life of man – our world was **CURSED**, and we were **CORRUPTED**.

We found that there are three contributing factors to the decline of the state of our world and of our own lives:

(1) The first contributing factor is the **DANGER** of sin

Sin is a **PRESENT, PERSONAL**, and **PATIENT** danger.

(2) The second contributing factor is the **DESIRE** of sin

Sin is delightful for a season because it pursues the fantasies of our wicked mind, and it pursues the pleasures of our deceitful heart.

(3) The third contributing factor is the **DOMINION** of sin

Sin promises us control, authority, and power (all things that deep down we really want), but then it hops in the driver's seat of our life and takes in a direction and toward a destination that does not care about our health and wellbeing or the health and wellbeing of those around us.

Sin drove our entire world towards things that are **PERVERSE**, that are **NOT PLEASING**, that are **WASTEFUL**, and that are **WRONG**. However, there was one man who found grace in the sight of God – Noah.

(1) Because of his discernment, Noah was an **EXCEPTION IN HIS GENERATION**.

(2) Because of his discernment, Noah was **EXEMPLARY IN HIS GODLINESS**.

(3) Because of his discernment, Noah was an **EXAMPLE OF GREAT FAITH**

MESSAGE

Noah **FOUND** grace in the eyes of the Lord, Noah **FOLLOWED** the instructions of the Lord (to build the Ark and to fill the Ark), and Noah and his family **FOUND** safety and blessing in and through the flood.

Genesis 7:23 says, *“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they*

were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

For almost a year, Noah and his family lived and remained on the Ark. I think that there is something to be said here about **PATIENCE**. God wants us to trust Him and God wants us to demonstrate discernment, but we are to do those two things continually while we wait on God's will to be **REVEALED** to us and while we are being **READIED** for what God knows is best.

Have you ever noticed that the problems that resurface after the flood don't show up until Noah and his family got off the boat?

When Noah and his family first got off the Ark, their **WORSHIP** pleased God.

Genesis 8:18-21 says, "And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."

And so, initially, once Noah and his family got off the ark, but in an incredibly short period of time, we find that the **WICKEDNESS** that prevailed before the flood, didn't just resurface, but it began to progress just like it had prior to the flood.

By the time that we get to the beginning of Genesis chapter 11, we find that the sin of pride was already having a negative impact and was taking a heavy toll on the family of Noah. It always does. That's why from the very beginning of mankind, we find that there is a major difference in the lives of those who give themselves to **PRIDE** and in the lives of those who practice **HUMILITY**.

Proverbs 16:17-19 says, "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

When we consider the record of those that lived immediately after the flood...

- 1) We would find that pride was allowed to affect their **WALK** (their **METHODS** were wrong – "...drunkenness...nakedness...")
- 2) We would find that pride was allowed to affect their **WORK** (their **MEANS** were wrong – "build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven")

- 3) We would find that pride was allowed to affect their **WORSHIP** (their **MOTIVES** were wrong – “*make us a name*”)
- 4) We would find that pride was allowed to affect their **WANTS** (their **MATTERS** were wrong – “*let us be scattered*”)

Here’s a truth that is consistent throughout Scripture, pride will lead to a humbling in our life or humility will lead to the grace of God in our life, but the reality is that we make the choice on which direction that we are going to go.

James 4:6-8 says, “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

The inhabitants of the new world very quickly turned their back on God they served other gods. It was a decision that set the nations in a direction that developed an environment that was openly and fully defiant to the things of God. Sounds a lot like today, doesn’t it?

It was into this environment that God called Abraham to separate himself from the world and unto the Lord. Here’s the truth: God has called us out of a life of **EVER-INCREASING WICKEDNESS** and into a life of **ETERNAL WORTHINESS**.

1 John 2:15-17 says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

That’s why Paul says, in Romans 12:1-2 says, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”

Now, what we find is that a life of eternal worthiness, a life more, a life that is pleasing to the Lord, requires **TRUST** and **DISCERNMENT**, but it also requires **OBEDIENCE**.

Genesis 17:1 says, “*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*”

If you’re in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, let me encourage you to mark those last two statements: ...*walk before me, and be thou perfect.*”

Genesis 17:9 says, “*And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.*”

If you're in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, let me encourage you to mark the majority of that verse: *"...Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations."*

Hebrews 11:8 says, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*

If you're in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, let me encourage you to highlight the following statement: *"By faith Abraham...obeyed..."*

For a few moments, I'd like to consider this thought: **MORE OBEDIENCE - PLEASING GOD MORE MEANS OBEYING GOD FIRST.**

From the very beginning of his walk with God, we find that God places a tremendous emphasis on both Abraham's **FAITH** and Abraham's **OBEDIENCE**.

Hebrews 10:23 says, *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"*

James 2:18 says, *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."*

In some ways, it was easier for Abraham to make the choice to trust God than it was for Abraham to obey God. Why? Because obedience is the feet of faith. Obedience is faith in action. I can say that I believe God with my lips, but my faith is truly seen through a life of obedience.

We see this in the fact that Abraham was commanded by God to **KEEP** the commandments (covenant) of the Lord, they were to **WALK** before the Lord, and they were to **KEEP** the way of the Lord.

Genesis 17:1 says, *"...the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."*

This word *perfect* here does not mean sinless perfection. The reality is that no one, aside from Christ, has ever lived perfectly in this world. Let me say it this way: while we cannot be perfectly sinless, we can make the decision to sin less. The word *perfect* here means "to be blameless."

When we get to Genesis chapter 17, we need to understand that Abraham had not been blameless in his walk with God. He had made mistakes (he went down into Egypt, he lied about Sarai being his wife, and he and Sarai tried to take the matter of the promise of God into their hands which produced a child that is still causing the Jews problems to this very day) In Genesis chapter 13, God had allowed an extended season of silence to set in (13 years). Why? Abraham had sinned. Instead of relying on God, Abraham trusted himself more than God and God had to bring Abraham to the end of himself so that when God

began to noticeably speak into and move again in his life, he would trust God and obey God. God was essentially commanding Abraham to get up and to go forward, but to do so differently than he had before.

God reveals Himself to Abraham by the name *EL Shaddai* – the Almighty God. In essence God is telling Abram, “Abram, I know you don’t understand and I know that this is hard for you to understand right now, but you can trust me.”

“I can forgive you for the mistakes that you have made.”

“I can straighten out the mess that you have made.”

“I can strengthen you, I can satisfy you, and I can sustain you.”

“I can give you the victory, but you must refuse to sin and don’t take shortcuts. Trust Me, obey Me, and I will bring My perfect plan into reality in your life in My perfect timing, and I will pour many wonderful blessings into your life.”

That’s what faith and obedience will produce in our lives. Now, the reality is that Abraham didn’t get there overnight. He had to move beyond half-hearted faith and half-hearted obedience.

If we’re going to please God more in 2024, then we are going to have to go make the decision to go **ALL IN**.