

Growing in the Grace of God #01 - the New Covenant Part 1

by Bob Hoekstra

This course explores the study of the grace of God, focusing on the New Covenant, growing in the grace of God, and serving in the grace of God.

Duration: 34:55

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 22:20, 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, Hebrews 9:15

Topics: "New Covenant", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

The video is an introduction to a biblical study on growing in the grace of God through the New Covenant. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the message of the law and its limitations. He explains that the law was never intended to fulfill certain things and using it inappropriately can lead to spiritual death. The purpose of the course is to explore how the grace of God enables believers to grow and serve effectively in Christ.

Transcript

Study number one involves an introduction to the Course and a beginning to plunge into the issue of the New Covenant, which tonight we'll see how it relates to this matter of growing in the grace of God. The description of the Course we'll read the Course description as given and then let me comment a little about it on page two. This class will be a biblical study of how the grace of God is provided for us in order to grow effectively in Christ and to serve Him fruitfully.

This will be demonstrated as a basic aspect of the New Covenant which Christ purchased with His own blood. We can see that in Luke 22:20 and also if you want to add there 2 Corinthians 3, 4 through 6. Let's read those two passages. Great just to begin immediately to let the Lord speak out of the word to us on this subject.

Two of our three or four basic theme verses for this class. Luke 22:20 is one of them. Likewise, He also took the cup after supper saying this cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for you.

The New Covenant purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. We'll give much more attention to that verse in each phrase of it a little later on. 2 Corinthians 3, 4 through 6. 2 Corinthians 3, 4 through 6. And we have such trust through Christ toward God not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being

from ourselves but our sufficiency is from God who also made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant.

Not of the letter but of the Spirit for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. The New Covenant Christ purchased it with His own blood and we are servants of the New Covenant. Servants of that New Covenant.

We serve under that New Covenant. That's how we relate to God and walk with God. Basically, this course is a 12-week study of the grace of God.

That's what this course is. To look at what God is doing in many lives, many ministries around the world. It describes what God desires to do, can do in all hearts that are open and hungry and available.

I certainly see God doing this kind of work, a New Covenant growing in the grace of God work in a lot of the Calvary chapels. I haven't been to all of them but I've been to well I don't know how many, maybe hundreds. So this is not different from what God is doing here and there, near and far.

I certainly see God doing that mightily in this particular fellowship that has been home to us since I left pastoring after 11 years at Calvary Chapel Irvine. We saw in the church I pastored in Dallas, Texas, ministering there 14 years. We struggled major early on in that church because we were basically, to put it quite biblically, striving after the flesh, ministering under the letter of the law.

And that produces death. It doesn't produce life. And we'll look at those issues in depth in Second Corinthians in the second half of this course.

But God brought a mighty revival to that church that I first pastored in Dallas and the grace of God became strategic, precious, life-giving, transforming, revolutionary. And I love the grace of God more today than back in those days when I first tasted of it in depth and sweetness. So what is this course? It's a study in the grace of God.

It's the way God has always worked. And though we often overlook it, miss it, and sometimes take years to embrace it, that's still the way God works whenever we allow Him to work. So that's what this course is about.

What this course is not. This course is not a study of covenant theology. Some have seen verses on the new covenant and statements about the new covenant in the course description and have asked me early on, maybe, I think I've taught this class here and elsewhere together now maybe five or six times, and some have asked, is this a study in covenant theology? Absolutely not.

Number one, I personally don't believe that covenant theology is a valid, comprehensive explanation of biblical truth. You know, Reformed Calvinism, in other words. Not that it doesn't have a lot of great truths in it, and also not that I don't know a lot of great Christians that are very strongly adhered to that Reformed theology, but just very candidly, just for our own acquaintanceship and all, I don't buy it.

I bow my knee to a lot of it, because I believe it's absolutely biblical, but that's another reason it's not a study in covenant theology, because I don't think Reformed Calvinistic covenant theology, I think it's too tight of a human contrived system to ever fit all the Bible into it. So that's not what this course is about. In fact, this course isn't defending any popular systematic theology.

I think there are a number of them that are quite biblical, and the Calvary Chapel General, although it isn't a real tight systematic theology, I believe is a very biblical. That's one reason I'm in it. I just think it's committed to the Word of God.

But this class is not to defend any systematic theology. Any system of theology that is really anchored in the Word, praise God for it, it'll give us insight, but no man's ever going to systematize everything God has told us with no loose ends hanging out or questions still to be answered. And personally, I would like a theology that's anchored in the Word, taught by the Spirit, but always open to new insight from God, in studying and reading the Word, and in having it ministered to me by other brothers and sisters.

The only perfect theologian is God Himself. All the rest of us are learning. So this is not a defense or even an attack on any systematic theology.

It's just a study of the grace of God as declared in the Scriptures. This class also is not something different, really, from what we've seen in many ministries, maybe the churches that we're in. It's not some new thing just discovered, though I'll be amazed if God doesn't surprise you with His grace.

I'll be amazed if He doesn't convince you it's bigger than you thought it was. I'll be very surprised if you don't at least inside go, Whoa! Whoa! I didn't see that! I didn't know that that's what grace was for. That too? Wow! I'm sure inside we'll have some of those experiences.

But it's not some new thing just discovered, and certainly not some esoteric insight that's held apart just for some elite few. This is how God has worked in every life that has ever allowed Him to work, from the first time He's ever touched a life. So that's a little bit about what the course is and what the course is not.

Now what is the purpose of the course? Along with those four lines of terms you see under purpose, out on the far right-hand side, if you want to make a little room to write three reasons answering why this class kind of fits under purpose and want to add it there. Purpose of this class, before we look at growing, serving grace in the New Covenant under that heading, why this class? What are its goals? Number one, that we understand these realities of the grace of God more. Number two, that we be enabled to walk in them more.

And number three, that God might equip us more to minister these realities of His grace to others. When God equips us to embrace and walk in His grace and minister to others, it absolutely multiplies our ministry and it protects it from being religiously deadening to people, but rather life-giving to people. And we'll look much at scriptures that show that those are exactly what the issues are.

Spiritual life or death, spiritual vitality or religious dryness. That's what hinges on our understanding, embracing and ministering the grace of God. Back under purpose, one way to think through the purpose of this class is just to take a moment to reflect on the terms that are involved in the title and the course description, like the word growing.

2 Peter 3.18 says, but grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is God's will that we grow, that we mature, that we develop in Christ likeness. That is the will of God.

But here's the question, how? What is God's dynamic of transformation in our lives? And I think we'll see that the reason we're called to grow in the grace of God is because it's the grace of God that causes us to grow. One reason some Christians experience very stunted growth is they have a very meager diet of the realities of the grace of God. The diet of the law is a bare-bones diet.

Here, bite into this skeleton. Here's all the salt and pepper you want. But there's not much nourishment there.

Oh, there's a frame of something important to see, but it's not life-giving. And we'll see why as we go through the Scriptures. Not only growing, but serving.

Serving as well. That also appears, that term is a key one in the Course description. Serving.

It is God's will that we not only grow, but that we serve Him. That we become workers in His vineyard. But again, we must always ask the question, not just what, but how? Workers in the vineyard, that's the what God desires.

The question always must be asked, but how? What is our message, our method, our resource? Again, what's the dynamic to bring abundant labors to pass? 2 Corinthians 9.8, which we'll hit twice through this course, once in some considerable measure of attention, and once in a final reference toward the end, says, and God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for what? To be Mr. Blessing himself? No. An abundance for every good work. Abounding grace is for abundant work.

One produces the other. Growing and serving, then the word grace. This is the vital factor we will examine.

Grace. Philippians 4.23. Philippians 4.23. Last verse of that great epistle. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen. This is the typical closing of most New Testament epistles. And most of them start out with grace and peace to you.

Why does God wrap all these letters in grace? Well, He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. And grace is the great characteristic of His heart in Jesus Christ toward us. No wonder when He writes the message of His heart to us, starts out with grace, ends with grace.

Even the end of Revelation is about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ being with you. This is the vital factor we will examine in this class. The grace of God.

It's sometimes misunderstood. Some people get skittish about the grace of God because they've been wrongly told or some have inferred or taught that it means no personal responsibility. Hey! Don't sweat it, God's grace will cover it.

That's not the Spirit speaking, that's the flesh speaking. Others have thought, well, grace, that probably means there's no good works, right? There's no pressure, no leverage, you better or you gotta or watch out. You know, grace, I mean, you know, people, they're lazy.

Watch that grace stuff, it's going to lead to laziness. That again is not the Spirit speaking, that's the flesh speaking. The flesh is lazy.

Flesh has these amazing extremes. It's either lazy or it's going to build its whole standing in life on its great productive works. And either way, it's totally missing the mark.

It's a misunderstanding of grace. But probably, apart from misunderstanding grace, probably the saddest thing is the underestimating of grace. Where you might say, if we could use the word rightly, where grace is underused, under attended to, ignored, overlooked, that's usually the greatest problem with grace.

It's a problem to misunderstand grace. And often we do. But we not only want to understand it, we want to use it to God's great ends and we'll see them along the way.

Another key term in the Course description that is a biblical term, every one of these terms come right out of the scriptures we'll be using. This is not a kind of a Christian philosophical study on life. We're trying to anchor every critical statement, principle, insight, heading, class section, anchor every one of them in the Word of God in multiple verses using the exact terms right out of the scripture.

Which I believe is the way God wants us to respond to His Word, take it that seriously and not get drifting off somewhere, you know. We just start talking in kind of a Christian philosophical way, you know. Let me tell you what I think about that.

Well, you know, we love you but who cares? Tell us what God says about that. Opinions are so cheap and they just abound everywhere you look. We want to know what God has to say about it and then you'll see we're just going to spend a lot of time right in the text.

The New Covenant, another biblical term. A covenant is an agreement between parties. A contemporary term would be a contract.

Concerning the New Covenant, I like to use the word arrangement, which is a fitting word. Contract is so much like one party brings their share, the other party brings their share and in contracts everyone's fighting for at worst equity. Maybe I'll get 51 or 52 percent, you know.

That's the contracts. Is that fair? You know, when you look at the New Covenant, you look at what God brings to it. Then you look at what we bring to it.

It's just hard for me to use the word contract, you know. I like to use the word arrangement because God has arranged it that way. We bring bankruptcy.

He brings all the riches of heaven. Quite a contract, huh? I like to call it an arrangement because God arranged it that way. It's God's new arrangement for relating to Him.

The New Covenant. Now that's covenant. How about the word new and how it relates to the covenant? Romans 7.6. Romans 7.6. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by.

Boy, that's strong language, isn't it? So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Thank God we've been delivered from the law. It was a heavy-handed taskmaster.

It just kept telling us, be holy. And we said, how we doing? And the law said, not well. You're condemned.

Having died to what we were held by. We died with Christ and before that we were held by the law in guilt, condemnation, alienation, separation. But now we've been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter.

The New Covenant, it isn't so much a chronological thing. In fact, the roots of the New Covenant are older than the Old Covenant. We'll get into that along the way.

I love the way God just kind of messes with our minds. My ways are not your ways. High as heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above yours.

But I think as we get into it, it'll make, as God explains, it'll make perfect sense. Make perfect sense. The new aspect of the New Covenant is not so much its chronology as it is its newness.

Its freshness. Newness of the Spirit. There's nothing ever old about the Holy Spirit.

Because though He's everlasting, He always was and is and shall be. He just is. He's not growing and developing and aging.

He's part of the triune God, the great I Am. And that's the New Covenant. It has the newness of the Spirit in it, that always fresh infusion of God's presence and work.

Newness, freshness, vitality, life. Look at Hebrews 10, 19. We'll hit a number of places, by the way, in Hebrews.

And I think you'll see why. Hebrews, I mean, the New Covenant appears in Hebrews time and time and time and time again. Hebrews 10, 19 and 20.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. Think of the old deadness in the letter of the law. Yeah, you can approach God.

Let's start out there in the courtyard with some animal sacrifices and washing in the laver and let's climb up on in there into the holy place and there's that veil. Oh, getting close to God, closer than outside, but don't dare go in there, you'll be struck dead. Hey, this is a tough way to approach God.

Oh, don't worry, one man once a year can go in there. Or as he goes in, fear and trembling. Not sure if he'll come out.

They put bells on his robe and a rope on his ankle. The bells stop, the rope yanks. Great way to approach God.

Oh, boy, does that ever teach about the sin of man and the holiness of God. You don't just walk up buddy-buddy to God. And yet, we have boldness.

What the high priest can only do once a year, we just kinda with boldness enter in by the blood of Jesus. We'll talk a lot about that too. By a new and living way, as contrasted with the old and dead way.

It's not so much a matter of chronology, it's a matter of character. The New Covenant has a newness, a freshness, a vitality to it. It has life.

Remember Lamentations 3, 23, mercies of God are new every day. We'll spend some time looking at the New Covenant in the Old Testament. That messes up man's mind too.

Wait a minute, wait a minute. What's that doing there? New and the old. We're talking about an eternal God.

He didn't change His ways of dealing with man, He just made it more and more clear how to walk with Him. We'll look at that issue too along the way. New and living way.

His mercies are new every day. So for a little while, let's launch into well, and before we launch into the New Covenant itself, probably a perfect time for just a little taster of where we're going. This is a kind of a target we've set up that God's going to let us march toward in the Word.

Let's look at a little more of the framework. That first page I think we'll have on the front of it, the course outline. Let's just get a little appetizer taste.

In a moment we'll look at the New Covenant. We'll see it was promised to Israel eventually. It's been inaugurated for the church now, provided by the blood of Christ and all related to the grace of God.

Then next week we'll look at the Old Covenant. So important to let God speak to us in the Old Covenant if we're going to truly appreciate and embrace the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is a covenant of law.

The New Covenant is a covenant of grace. Nothing causes us to appreciate the grace of God more than a true understanding, perhaps, of the law of God. And then once we see that and we have its great appreciation of the grace of God, then as the unfolding of the grace of God comes, we appreciate it more and more and more and more.

So we'll look at the Old Covenant of law. We'll look at its message, its ability, its inability, and its fulfillment. And it's amazing how easily people get all four of those confused.

The message of the law. What is it really saying? Paul said, Galatians 4.20, tell me you who desire to live under the law, do you hear what the law is saying? He was aghast. He was shocked.

You want to live under the law? Wait a minute, you're not hearing its message. We'll look at that. Its message is far more radical than we would ever imagine.

Then the inability of the law, the things the law cannot do. The law was never intended to do some things. Yet Christians all the time and unsaved religious people are trying to use the law to do what God never intended for the law to do.

That either leaves people in death or it pours deadness upon their Christian life. But we'll look at the ability of the law. There are things the law can do and is very effective at them and they're very important.

And we'll look at the big, big issue. Well then, how is the law fulfilled? Critical question. Then the third week we'll look at the new covenant of grace and we'll see that we live under grace, not law.

Then we'll look at God's justifying grace. But just quickly, why? Because this course is basically not about God's justifying grace. We're pretty familiar with that.

That's how we entered the family of God. We're going to study in this class the most neglected, overlooked aspect of the grace of God and that is the sanctifying grace of God. God's grace to change us day by day to make us more like Jesus Christ.

Then we'll look at the issue of access to grace. Then how do we access it daily in our lives? Fourth week is entitled the Holy Spirit Covenant. In looking at the new covenant, we're going to take a number of weeks and look at major characteristics of the new covenant.

That is, here's one, it's the Holy Spirit Covenant. You take the Holy Spirit out of the new covenant, it's dead, lifeless, and useless. Then we'll look at another aspect of the new covenant.

It's the resurrection covenant. And again, we'll look at the resurrection and the new covenant, see how they're totally intertwined. Then we'll look at this applied to starting out with God, that is justification, new birth.

Then we'll spend most of our time looking at it related to going on with God, that is, sanctification. Yes? Anyone to Point Loma? Sorry, that's alright brother. Point Loma is down the coast, way beside San Diego.

God's grace. We all probably know, generally, that we could not be born again without the resurrection. But, as true as that is, we need the resurrection applied not only to our birth into the family of God, but our walk, growth, and service in the family of God.

And it is absolutely related to daily Christian living, not just getting victory over sin and death. We'll also look at the new covenant this way. It's a covenant of relationship.

That's one of the characteristics of it. It's about relationship, not rules and regulations and do's and don'ts. It's about relationship.

And we'll look at this classic phrase in the Bible, in Christ. Then we'll look at another exciting one, Christ in us. And we'll look at some more prepositional phrases that have Christ all over them.

Through Christ and by Christ. And then getting to know God. Then we'll look at characteristics of new covenant living.

This will take some weeks, the characteristics of new covenant living. That section of the class will be a verse-by-verse exposition of 2nd Corinthians chapters 2, 3, and 4, which are all about the new covenant. 2nd Corinthians.

Thank you. Did I say 1st? It is 2nd though. Whatever I said, it's 2nd.

It is 2nd Corinthians. 2nd Corinthians 2, 3, and 4. There's some outlines. And we'll see some amazing things.

That as we walk in the terms of the new covenant, God develops in our lives certain characteristics of life. The things people strive to make themselves become, God produces in us when we walk under the terms of the new covenant. What would you rather do? Give the best shot at changing yourself? Or just walk as God calls and let Him do the changing? Not a tough question, is it? Yeah, B, really.

B, circle, exclamation. Well, we'll see under this characteristic of new covenant living that as we walk under the terms of the new covenant, which are terms of grace, and we'll let the Scriptures define those a lot for us, we become those who are led in triumph, become a fragrance of Christ, have a godly sincerity developed in our lives, become letters of Christ, and find our true source of sufficiency. Our lives are just marked that way.

And then there's some contrast between the old and new covenants. And then there's some contrast between the old and new covenants. One of my favorite studies in the whole course.

They're so vivid. Ink versus the spirit. Stone versus human hearts.

Letter versus spirit. Ministry of death versus ministry of life. All of these are phrases right out of the Scriptures that we're going to meditate on together.

Ministry of condemnation versus ministry of righteousness. What kind of ministry do you want? A ministry of condemnation or a ministry of righteousness? And then the contrast, old and new covenant. Fading glory versus remaining glory, and then substantial glory versus excelling glory.

These are all right out of 2 Corinthians chapter 3. And more characteristics of new covenant living. Then at the bottom of the page, new covenant obedience. How does obedience relate to the grace of God? Big issue, big question.

We'll look at the old covenant demand, which is wholehearted obedience. We'll look at the new covenant promise. I won't say anything about that one now.

That's an exciting area to get into. And then we'll look at new covenant fulfillment. In the new covenant, there is provision for a growing life of obedience.

And it doesn't hinge on the most popular Christian path of obedience. You know, did I try hard enough? No, try harder. That's what the law says.

It's amazing what God has provided for a life of obedience. Back of the page, the last two weeks of the class, a covenant of better promises. There are promises in the old covenant, but oh, the promises of the new covenant are so much better.

There's no comparison. So much better. Then the last class, we'll look at various aspects of new covenant grace.

It's kind of a catch-all class, but I must confess it's one of my favorites. We'll look at new covenant truth in the Old Testament. We'll look at how the grace of the new covenant relates to bearing fruit.

And then how the grace of the new covenant relates to good works. And then actually, my own testimony, my personal favorite section of the whole class is that last little heading, the much more grace of God. I love that section of scripture out of Romans chapter 5. And that's where we're headed.

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