

Growing in the Grace of God #12 - a Covenant of Relationship Part 2

by Bob Hoekstra

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the covenant of relationship, where we are in intimate union with God, identified with Him, and He works in our lives through Christ and by Christ.

Duration: 40:35

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42, Romans 5:17, Romans 5:21, 1 Corinthians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:3, 2 Peter 1:2-3

Topics: "Intimate Relationship", "New Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing God and drawing on His power and grace. The New Covenant allows believers to have an intimate relationship with God and access everything they need for life and godliness. The speaker encourages listeners to 'taste and see' that the Lord is good, just as one would get to know chocolate ice cream by tasting it. The goal is to press on and know God better, as this is the surpassing value and the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

A covenant of relationship. We've looked at some of the great aspects of the truth of us being in Christ. Then we've also looked at Christ in us.

Now, we'll look at a couple more before we conclude our study. One is through Christ and by Christ. Romans 5, 17 and 21.

Through Christ and by Christ. For if by the one man's offense death reign through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. We'll come back to this verse in our last section of our course, a section called the much more grace of God.

And we'll close our entire course at that point. I think it's a mountaintop verse in all the New Testament. And there's so much there.

I've had the blessing a number of times now in the past year just just studying that one verse, teaching and meditating on it in like an hour message. And every time I do I feel like, oh no, there's there's so much more there. It's a powerful verse.

But just for our purpose tonight, we're in Christ and Christ is in us. And in this covenant of relationship, which is so intimate that it's one of union, identification, we're one with the Lord. God works in our lives through Christ and by Christ.

Too often we think of the Lord says or does this and we do this or that. Now that's part of it. But it's far deeper than that.

It's not just God says do this and we try our best to do it. Or God says I'm going to change you and somehow, you know, somehow he changes us or did we change us or you do half and I, you know. Here's how God works in our lives.

It's through Christ. It's by Christ. That's how it works in our lives.

That's how he touches us and changes us. See, we can be those learning to reign in life. We'll talk a lot about that in our last class because it's all about the abundance of grace, the phrase right in the middle of the verse.

But we reign in life not even by how we take grace and make it work. Reigning in life has to do with learning to receive abundance of grace. But even as we're learning to do that, the way God is working in our lives as we live by grace is we learn to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

Through the one, by means of another, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 21, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God is always working in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of who Jesus is, in light of what Jesus provides for us, in light of our relationship to Jesus Christ, the work of the Father is through the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives. First Corinthians 1, verses 4 and 5, I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge. Terrific two verses on this issue of a covenant of relationship and it's through that relationship with the Lord that God works.

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you. How was the grace of God given to us? By Christ Jesus. How do we enter more and more into the grace of God? By the work of Jesus Christ in and through our lives.

Verse 5, you were enriched in everything. Doesn't that sound like Ephesians 1, 3? You were enriched in everything. You've been blessed with every spiritual blessing.

How? By Him. The work of the Father in and through our lives is through Christ. It is by Christ.

He's the means. He's the avenue accomplished for us by His work in us and our relationship with Him. Philippians 1, 11.

A prayer which ends with this phrase, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. To the glory and praise of God. If we want lives filled with righteous fruit, how is it going to happen? Well, the righteous fruit, it's by Jesus Christ.

Takes you back to the picture of the vine and the branches. The righteous fruit, that's the grapes. Where they come from? They come from the vine.

They don't come from the resources of the branch. Our lives can be filled with the fruits of righteousness. But the more we know where those fruits of righteousness come from, the more we look to Him for them, the more we'll see them in our lives.

Our lives can be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. So obviously, end of the verse, to the glory and praise of God. What if those fruits of righteousness were by us? Well, to the glory and praise of us.

But they aren't. They're by Christ Jesus. To the glory and praise of God.

Because righteous fruit in our lives is through the presence and work of Jesus Christ in us. Who gets the glory and the praise? God Himself. In this covenant of relationship where we live in Christ and Christ lives in us, the Father works in and through our lives through Christ and by Christ.

Ultimately, what this new covenant then is all about, it's about getting to know God, our last heading. It's about getting to know God. That is, building and developing our relationship with Him.

That is, entering into a growing acquaintanceship with God. Remember what Jesus said, John 17, 3. And this is eternal life. Here's what it's all about.

This is the essence of it. It's not just escaping hell and getting heaven. It's not just, I once hated church, I now love it.

It's not once I couldn't stand to be around those weird Christians, now I'm one of them. It's this. This is eternal life.

That they may know you, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That strikes at the heart of what eternal life is all about. See, eternal life isn't just an extension of existence forever.

Listen, everyone in hell gets that too. That's not good news. Here's what eternal life is all about.

Knowing God through time and eternity. That's what eternal life is. It's a quality of life, essentially, which also includes an eternality of life, an unending existence with God.

Getting acquainted with God is what eternal life is all about. Remember Philippians 3. Philippians 3, 8, Yet indeed I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Outside of knowing God, everything else is like a loss, a minus value.

When you compare it to knowing God, that's how great it is to know God. The excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. It could be translated for the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

I think that's the way the new American Standard translates it. Same word, just a little bit different emphasis in it. The surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

This word, the excellence, means the surpassing value. Of anything that looks valuable, this is the surpassing value. There's nothing more valuable than this.

Getting to know God is what it's all about. Therefore, Philippians 3.10, Paul says that I may know him. That's where Paul was aiming all the time.

By the way, a little bit later in the same context, Paul said in verse 13, but one thing I do. How about that? Here's a guy, if you wrote his job description, it looked like he did 47 things. How does he do all those things? He might say to us, all of what things? I'm just doing one thing.

One thing? Yeah, one thing I do. Really, it is pressing on to know the Lord. Pressing on to know the Lord.

That's the one thing he did. He said that's the surpassing value. He says later, that I may know him.

And then later he adds, one thing I do. Verse 14, he presses toward the goal. What's the goal? To know God better.

That's the goal. That's the one thing he's aiming at all the time. For the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What's the prize? Every benefit that accrues from getting to know him. You know, reaching the goal. What's the upward call of God in Christ Jesus? It's the heavenward invitation of God.

Come and get to know me. I mean, the whole verse is about knowing God. The goal, the prize, and the call are all about knowing God.

The one thing Paul did, boy, did he narrow it down? How would you like to have one thing consuming, defining your entire life? Psalm 27, David said, one thing I have asked of the Lord, that I shall seek. What? That I may dwell in the house of the Lord. Just live with God.

That's all I'm asking for. That's what I'm aiming at. Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary said to Martha, Martha, one thing is necessary.

And Mary's doing it. What was she doing? Sitting at the feet of Jesus, entering into that acquaintanceship with him. You know, just getting to know the Lord.

This is what it's all about. This new covenant of grace. It's not, you know, here's a way to have more fun in life than you ever dreamed you could, or you know, here's a way to explore your Christian liberty and just see how, you know, how bad a movie you can go to, you know, something like that.

I mean, this is so much another direction. All that stuff can be so... Praise God for Christian liberty. But the greatest liberty of all is we are free to know Him.

Nothing can stop us anymore. We're free. We don't have to be slaves in darkness, slave-serving self, the world or the flesh.

We're free to press on to know the Lord. There's no greater use of freedom than that. The new covenant, it's a covenant of relationship.

It's all about we can now really, really get to know God. We looked at this prayer of enlightenment earlier, Ephesians 1. We read verse 18, a prayer that the eyes of our understanding be enlightened. That's what we need to know what is ours in Christ.

But verse 17 really precedes it and goes to the deeper issue. Ephesians 1.17, a prayer that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in what? In the knowledge of Him. That is, in the process of getting to know Him.

What a prayer that is. That God Himself would give to us spiritual wisdom and spiritual revealing. In other words, that the Holy Spirit would make us wise in an unfolding understanding of who God is, a knowledge of God.

What a prayer that is. There couldn't really be a higher prayer in the scriptures. A prayer that we, by the work of God, would be enlightened in wisdom and revelation to know God, wow, doesn't get any higher than that.

That's what the New Covenant is all about. The New Covenant is given to us so we might expect and anticipate an answer to that kind of prayer. I mean a yes answer because no is a valid answer for God.

Probably a good thing for us too. How about if God were pledged to answer yes to everything you ask? Can you imagine the mess we'd be in? Think of the things you prayed for. Oh, I just didn't get an answer to that prayer.

Oh, yes you did. No. As your loving Heavenly Father who has your best interests in mind, no.

Answer prayer. It's great, you know. God answers prayer.

And He does. He's got a lot of answers. The main ones are yes, no, and wait.

Seems like that one comes a lot, doesn't it? Wait is a real important answer to prayer. Just wait. Boy, what God does while we're waiting, I tell you.

2 Peter 3.18. 2 Peter 3.18, one of the theme verses of this course, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to grow in acquaintanceship with God. We can grow in acquaintanceship with God, just like we can with people.

Think of the people you know better now than you used to know. How did it happen? Well, basically through communication. Them revealing themselves to you, you revealing yourself to them.

Well, we're made in the image and likeness of God. We can relate to God like that. I'll give you one guess on this quick pop quiz.

What do you think is more important? Us revealing ourselves to Him or Him revealing Himself to us? It's kind of a lopsided relationship, you know. We're pouring out our heart telling God what's in us, you know, and God's probably saying, thanks, you needed that. But then He opens up His heart to us.

He lets us get to know Him. He lets us know what He's like, what He loves, what He hates, what He rejoices in, what breaks His heart, what He's done, what He has, who He is. And we can grow in friendship with Him, walk with Him, talk with Him, laugh with Him, cry with Him, get to know God, build a friendship with God, like Abraham.

Maybe become known as a friend of God. That too is what reconciliation is about. We used to be enemies of God.

Not that He didn't have love toward us, but we behave like an enemy toward God. What did He do to show us? Send His Son to die for us. Boy, who wouldn't want to be a friend with Him, you know? You did that when I was like that? My goodness, what are you going to do now that I love you? You did that when I hated you? You did that when I ignored you? You did that when I was far off? Here I am right next to you,

in you, and learning to love you.

Wow, what are you going to do now? Save us by His life, that's what He's going to do. If He changed us into a friend by His death, He'll just go on saving us by His life. In conclusion, John 14, 10.

John 14, 10. I think these are great verses. We'll add a couple of more also to the conclusion list.

Great verses to conclude the covenant of relationship intimate closeness with God. John 14, 10. Jesus speaking, do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority.

Now look at this. But the Father who dwells in me does the works. You know, we often talk about, I want to be like Christ.

And I think in the kindergarten stage of that, which is a fine stage to start out at. You don't start out at, you know, in heavenly PhD with God. You know, we all start out as little babies.

You know, Lord teach me the ABCs. You know, how did Jesus do it? What did Jesus say? I'm going to mimic Him. Well, that's better than where we used to be.

Think of the people we were mimicking and the things we were pantomiming. But we begin to learn eventually, hey, it's bigger than that. It's not, let's see if I can walk and talk and look and stand like Jesus.

Or even kind of repeat the words. But really be like Him. Really.

Like, like this. When Jesus lived upon the earth, how did He relate to the Father? How did He do it all so great all the time? How did He always please the Heavenly Father? Boy, I'd sure like to be like Him there. The amazing thing is the Lord pulls back the veil by His own self-revelation.

He says, here's how it worked between me and the Father. You want to know how it worked when I was here? Showing you not only who the Father was, but showing you exactly how man was intended to live. In full trust, obedience, and union with His Maker.

Here's how it happened. While I was here on earth, there speaking, here on earth, I'm in the Father. But the Father is also in me.

And these words I'm speaking, you're hearing these words? I didn't come up with these on my own. Now He could have, He's God. But see Philippians 2, He laid that independent exercise of His deity aside.

He came as a servant. He says these words, I didn't drum these up. I'm not speaking these on my own authority.

The Father who dwells in me is doing all of this. How did Jesus reveal the Father? John 1 says, we saw His glory, those who looked upon Him as the Word became flesh. Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus revealed the glory of the Father. In fact, He said to His disciples, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Why? Because the Father was living right through Him every day.

It's too easy to think, Jesus, oh, no problem. He's God. He stepped down here and did it.

No, He didn't. He came down here and walked in humble, faithful dependence on the Father. And the Father just poured out life through Him.

The Father in Him did the works. Well, we might say, what does that have to do with us? Well, we've been brought into the same kind of covenant, covenant of relationship. And in John 6.57, Jesus Himself applies this same kind of principle.

The way He lived with the Father, He applies it to how we're to live with Him. John 6.57, as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so He who feeds on me will live because of me. This is one of those great as so Bible verses.

I love to watch for terms and phrases like that. I love to pay real close attention to words, terms and phrases. You know why? Because the Lord has called us to listen up.

He who has ears to hear, let Him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. You want to know something spiritually important Jesus is saying? Listen up! But God will have to give you the ears. Pay close attention, but get the ears from the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures call us. Take heed, pay attention, listen, hearken. That's why I love to pay careful attention to words and phrases and terms.

It's just paying attention to God. In fact, I really believe that's what inductive Bible study is all about. I do not believe at all that inductive Bible study is a system of learning we found in the world and then we bring it to the Word and we open God up.

Who do we think we are? We've often thought of inductive Bible study that way. I believe that is biblically unsound. I believe totally in inductive Bible study.

I do it all the time. I've done it for over 25 years. I love to do it.

I've taught it. But the only reason I do it personally, the only reason I would ever teach it is because I believe the Bible teaches us to study it that way. I do not believe it's something we learn by the sages of the world.

The inductive way to learn. Oh, let's apply it to God, you know. Zap! We've gotcha! No way! God says, listen, hearken, pay attention.

I'm speaking to you. But you're going to have to ask me for the ears to hear. And we pray prayers like, open my eyes and I might see wonderful things in your law.

I love to watch for phrases like this. As, so. Boy, there's a powerful message in that.

In other words, as it was in this case, so exactly it's supposed to be in this case. And look at the case-to-case comparison. The first case is Jesus and the Father.

How Jesus lived depending on the Father. And he turns it to us, so it should be with you. As, so.

As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father. How did Jesus live that life he lived? He did it because of the Father. The Father was the dynamic force in his life.

Just like John 14.10 says, the Father abiding in me does the works. The living Father sent him. The Father of life, the great I am, the Father of eternity sent him.

Jesus didn't come drawing on his own resources, in other words. Now, he could have, yes he could have, but that was not the plan of God. Because if he came drawing his own resources, how could he show us how man was supposed to live? The Father had a plan where he would both reveal the Father, showing perfect revelation of God, while at the same time giving a perfect demonstration of man.

I mean, how do you do this? Only God can come up with these things. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father. That life Jesus lived on this earth, he lived it because of the Father.

Because of the Father's presence in him, the Father's faithfulness, the Father's activity, Jesus' dependence upon him. Again, you go, well that's amazing really, but again, what precisely does that have to do with us? As, so, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. He who feeds on me, you know, back to verse 35, he who comes to me shall never hunger.

If we come to the Lord Jesus with expectation, anticipating that he can be the life, the nurturing, the nourishment, the resource we need, it's like feeding on him. And what happens if we do that? We will live because of him. In other words, as the Father lived through the Son when he was on this earth, now the Son wants to live through us while we're on this earth.

As, so. That is what I would call profound Christ-likeness. Deep Christ-likeness.

Foundational Christ-likeness. Not just trying to think, act, talk, be a little like Jesus, but getting behind the veil, behind where eyes can see, Jesus, how did you live like that upon the earth? Well, as I did it, so you are to do it. I did it depending on the living Father.

I live because of the Father. Now I want you to live because of me. I'm now God the Son back on the throne, right hand of the Father, no longer the suffering servant.

I can now live through you, my deity, my godliness, my Christ-likeness, my holiness, my love, my faith, my patience, my peace, my joy. Jesus' relationship with the Father is a picture of our relationship with him. That's what the New Covenant opens up.

The New Covenant lets us enter into a walk with Jesus now, like Jesus had with the Father then. That's what the grace of God is about. It's about making a relational walk with God supernaturally real.

I mean this is so far above human religion. I mean this is out of sight. There's no way to even begin to understand this unless the Lord enlightens the eyes of our heart.

There's no way to hear this unless the Lord gives us ears to hear. But we don't have, you know, it's so easy to qualify for the understanding in the ears. It's like, Lord, I don't get it.

Help me. He gives grace to the humble. Lord, this seems very important.

Please unfold it for me. I'm not saying I've mastered it, but I tell you, it has become life to me. And I don't always do it, but I can tell quicker than ever when I'm not doing it.

I can tell when I'm speaking on my own authority. And I can tell more and more when I'm speaking on His. What a glorious covenant we have.

A covenant of relationship. Let's add another scripture here, 2 Peter 1 verses 2 and 3. 2 Peter 1 verses 2 and 3. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power is given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. Grace and peace multiplied to you.

Doesn't that sound good? I don't know how many times through the years since I began to learn of the grace of God in truth, began to walk in the peace of God more and more, I don't know how many times I have sensed that I needed the grace and peace of God to be multiplied to me. Added to me wouldn't do. And I drop full at a time, you know, here let me add a little grace and peace to you.

Thank you, but I need even more than that. I appreciate addition, but I'm craving multiplication. Grace and peace be multiplied to you.

You know, not just a straight line curve, but one of these exponential curves, you know, multiplied to you. You know, kind of working by a logarithm with God, you know. That's what's available.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you. We need it. God wants to do it and He has a way.

And look how simple it is. My goodness, it's so simple you just run right past it with a whole bunch of evangelical do's and don'ts, you know. Kind of a working by a logarithm with God, you know.

Vroom! That's what's available. Grace and peace be multiplied to you. We need it.

God wants to do it and He has a way. And look how simple it is. My goodness, it's so simple you just run right past it with a whole bunch of evangelical do's and don'ts, you know.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. God's grace and peace are multiplied to us, that is, into and upon our lives. How? In the knowledge of God.

To put it another way, as you and I get acquainted with God, His grace and peace are multiplied in our lives. We know how that works on a human level. If you know someone, say, whose life has been greatly touched by God, and they've greatly touched your life, how's it happen? Somehow, through some kind of acquaintanceship with them, if you didn't know them, you'd not be touched by what God did in their lives.

I always think of my own dear wife. A few months here, say, January, February, March, April, five months, we'll be married thirty years. She has been a fantastic partner, friend, encourager, warrior, co-walker on water.

I mean, she's been great. And from the beginning, God has touched my life deeply through her. It was through her I met the Lord Jesus Christ.

That'll get you off to a pretty good start right there. She thought I was saved, but, you know, can't blame her. She was only one year old in the Lord, in the church, and never taught the Bible.

How is she going to know there are guys like me around, you know? Roaming around the church, seeking to know God? No. Women! Boy, the Lord, he had the hook totally baited. I mean, I swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.

I chased her so hard till I ran face-to-face into God. But even that happened through getting to know her. You know? Acquaintanceship.

God has touched my life greatly through her, and He does to this day. He has even this very week but it's been through getting to know her. See, God's done a tremendous and great work in her life.

It would not benefit me at all if I didn't get to know her. You know, if I pulled the regular kind of American, you know, male macho thing, you know, honey, I'll have to be off slaying dragons, you know. Or I'll bring some dragon bacon home now and then, you know.

But you won't see much of me. I've got real important things to do, you know. I wouldn't get to know her.

The things God has done in her life would not impact me at all. But I hang out a lot with my wife, and I tell you, even with the schedule God's given me, I hang out a lot with her. If I'm in town, the only day I'm over here at our ministry office is Tuesday.

Every other day I'm in town, I'm at my study at home, and it's been that way for about 25 years. And I tell you, if you hang out together, you get acquainted, you know. There's no great trick to it, you know.

Just hang out together. You can let each other know of one another, you know, and get acquainted. It's exactly how it works with God.

I mean, on a human level, if our lives can be changed by getting to know another human that God's working in, how about if we just get to know God Himself? Won't that touch us? Yes. It will multiply the grace and peace of God toward us. And then the next verse, as His divine power is given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Well, how about that one? By the divine power of God, we're given all things that pertain to life and godliness. By the way, we spent a lot of time on that verse in the Counseling God's Way class. It has a major implication on how we counsel one another.

Major implication on what we use and don't use in our counseling ministry. As His divine power is given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, God has exercised His power to give to us everything we need to live life the way He desires and to grow in godliness as He desires. But here's the question.

How do we tap into it? How do we avail ourselves of it? He's given it all to us. How do we draw on it and use it? It's amazingly simple again. Through the knowledge of Him who called us.

The more we get to know the Lord, the more we avail ourselves of, draw on, access everything we need to live life His way and to grow in godliness. And that's what the New Covenant lets us do. It lets us enter in to an intimate acquaintanceship of knowing God.

And through that, grace and peace are multiplied and we tap into all things that we need for life and godliness. Our closing verse you may be familiar with, Psalm 34, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. How do you get to know the Lord? Well, here's one way.

Just taste and see. How do you get acquainted with chocolate ice cream? Actually, that would be my wife. I would be eating vanilla.

It's another miracle too. My wife and I naturally by inclination, personality, and Adamic makeup start out always at a different point on every issue. I mean, it is so phenomenally beyond any possibility of mathematical probability.

If there are two possibilities on any issue, only two, we don't need ten, just two, we never start out at the same place. But you know something, and I tell you this to the great glory of God and how real He is, we have never had a fight in 30 years. And yet we've had the potential for daily ones, if not hourly, you know.

It's astounding. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste and see, how do you taste the Lord? The rest of the verse tells you, blessed is the man who trusts in Him.

How do you taste the Lord? Trust Him for something. Just look at something in your life that's needy, lacking, and trust Him. And when He comes through and you're blessed, you'll go, mmm, that tastes good.

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much for your grace.

It's so exciting to us. It's so heart-stirring. It's so encouraging to see what you've done for us, that this new covenant of grace is that we might be in you, you might be in us, we might walk in friendship and union and acquaintanceship with you, that we might actually have the God of creation and redemption living in and through us.

Lord, unfold all these glorious works and provisions by revealing yourself to us. We want to become the friends of God, those who've tasted and we know the Lord is good. He's shown it time and time again.

Reveal yourself to us through your word, by your spirit, and in every step of life, we pray, by your presence and activity among us, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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