

THE TEN PLEASURES

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

THE POWER OF OUR PLEASURE



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

"Obeying God is hard....is painful...is impossible...is misery." We've all thought something like that. Some of us have said something like that. We have obeyed God without a problem and with pleasure for years but then God calls us to face a challenge that provokes thoughts and words like these.

Obedience is easy and happy when everything is going our way. But what about when it crosses our wills, when it involves loss, when it means sacrifice, when it hurts us or people we love? **Where can we find the power to obey, especially the power to obey with pleasure?**

Sometimes we feel like a power plant of obedience and pleasure. Other times we feel like a flat battery chilled by the biting cold of hard providences. **Where can we find the power to obey, especially the power to obey with pleasure?**

Sometimes we feel inner power to obey God's law. Other times we feel like it's all external, with God up there telling us to jump to impossible heights. **Where can we find the power to obey, especially the power to obey with pleasure?** That's the question Jeremiah answers in Jeremiah 31.

BACKGROUND

We built the biblical framework for calling the Ten Commandments the Ten Pleasures by looking at *The Path to Pleasure*. Then we looked at the person *The Person who is our Pleasure*, by seeing Christ in the Law. Today we want to look at the power of our pleasure.

Remember the first part of our framework which placed the law in a particular place and order: Redemption, Relationship, Rules, Reward. This order is assumed in this the second part of the framework. In other words, we are assuming that we have experienced redemption and are in a relationship with Jesus. Only then can we find pleasure in the law and in Jesus. But still the question remains: **Where can we find the power to obey, especially the power to obey with pleasure?**

That's the question the people of Judah were asking Jeremiah the prophet when God was carrying them into Babylonian exile for their centuries of disobedience to his law. God had chastised their disobedience many times over the decades, but now the ultimate divine sanction was being enforced. Will there ever be a day when we have the power to obey, and obey happily? **Where can we find the power to obey, especially the power to obey with pleasure?** Jeremiah's answer is that the Old Testament time of small internal help is going to be replaced with massive internal power in the New Testament (31:31-32).

The Hebrew word for 'new' in Jeremiah 31:31 does not mean something completely unprecedented or something entirely new. It means a 'renewal' and suggests the taking of an existing covenant and putting it into a new form. It's like a valuable antique chair that's been renewed, recovered, and restored, not a brand new *Steelcase* chair.



What does God put inside us?



1. I WILL BE YOUR POWERFUL INNER KING (33)

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts (33).

Although God's moral law was written perfectly in the hearts of our first parents, Adam and Eve, the fall almost obliterated its inscription. This is why God summarized it and engraved it on stone in the Ten Commandments. It is this same law which will be written in the hearts of God's people in the New Covenant. What is promised is not a removal of existing law, nor a replacing of it, but a new writer writing the old law in a new place.

Wider: It will be written not just on a couple of stone tablets but on an innumerable number of human hearts (Ps. 119:11; Deut. 10:18).

Deeper: Stones can only be scratched on the surface. Hearts can take much deeper impressions. God would put it so deeply within his people that it would be a warm internal delight to them, not a cold external prescription (Dt. 10:16 ;30:6).

Stronger: We all obey the law better when we see the police in front of us. How much more if a police officer lived inside us. Although God had generally used mediators to communicate his law in the Old Testament, now he was promising that he would directly write it on the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, giving both a greater awareness of the law and a greater power to obey the law. God's people will carry a King around with them.

Longer: The fulfillment of this promise **commenced** with the coming of Christ, the incarnate Law, and at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit (Ezek. 36:24-32). Both events injected a new power to obey into the Christian's experience. The promise **continues** to be fulfilled in the believer's sanctification by the Spirit's and empowering (2 Cor. 3:3, 18). The promise will be **consummated** at the second coming of Christ when the law of God will be written on the heart of every covenant child in such a way that they simply cannot disobey it and never want to disobey it.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

"I have an inner King." In every challenge King Jesus is with me by his Spirit to empower me to obey his will. Whenever I'm tempted to give up or give in, I remember I have the King within.

A KING WITHIN
MEANS POWER WITHIN



But how do I know God's will?



2. I WILL BE YOUR POWERFUL INNER TEACHER

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 (34).

Wider: There will be no religiously privileged elite or nation, but knowledge of God will extend to all ages and classes, "from the least of them to the greatest."

Deeper: To 'know the Lord' is much more than knowing about the Lord. It's a living, personal, relational, intimate, spiritual knowledge.

Stronger: As the pandemic has proven, screens are no substitute for in-person teaching. Having a teacher helps us to learn better, understand better, and use our knowledge better.

Longer: The fulfillment of this promise **commenced** with the first coming of Christ. He bypassed all the Jewish teachers and spoke directly to the people the words of truth. The promise **continues** to be fulfilled as His people are taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 2:20,27). The **consummation** of the promise will climax in glory with full face to face knowledge of Jesus (1 Cor. 13:12).

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

"I have an inside teacher." God uses external pastors and Sunday school teachers, but he also gives us an internal teacher to be with us more than an hour or two every Sunday.

HAVING INSIDE KNOWLEDGE
MEANS I HAVE INSIDE POWER



So what happens when I know God's will and can do God's will, but don't?



3. I WILL BE YOUR POWERFUL INNER PRIEST

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (34).

Wider: It was largely Jews who could access God's forgiveness in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, the message of forgiveness is sent into all the world. In the Old Testament, sacrifices covered ceremonial sins, but in the New Testament it covers all sins.

Deeper: The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (Heb 10:4). They could only cleanse the skin but not the conscience (Heb. 9:13 ff). They could allow temporary access to the Tabernacle but not permanent access to God's presence. But here is a promise of a far deeper forgiveness.

Stronger: In the upper room, Christ announced that the New Covenant was to be inaugurated through the shedding of His blood. **And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins** (Matt. 26:27-28).

Longer: Forgiveness of sin would be part of the New Covenant only because God provided a substitute to pay the penalty required of man. This forgiveness then is able to **commence** because of the first coming of Christ and his sacrificial death. The forgiveness **continues** to be promised and enjoyed through the Gospel of Christ. The final and full assurance of forgiveness will be **consummated** at Christ's second coming.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

"I have an inner priest." I don't need to travel to Jerusalem for one but can access him anywhere any time knowing that he is ready to forgive me all my sins and give me all the grace I need (Hebrews 4:14-16). Unforgiven sin weakens our resolve against sin, but forgiven sin strengthens our resolve to forsake sin (Ps. 130: 4).

UNFORGIVEN SIN WEAKENS US TO STOP SIN
FORGIVEN SIN STRENGTHENS US TO STOP SIN



Prophet, priest, and King sound very official.
Is there anything more personal?



4. I WILL BE YOUR POWERFUL INNER HUSBAND

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people (33).

Wider: In the Old Testament God promised to be Israel's husband in a special and unique way. In the New testament he promises to be the husband of all his people all over the world (Matt. 28:19-20).

Deeper: In the New Testament, the relationship is more personal than national (Eph. 5:22-33), more one-on-one than one-on-nation. Our spiritual husband and head not only loves a people but individual persons. He promises to be with each of his people by his Spirit, and will never leave or forsake them.

Stronger: This relational promise is the essential and central element of the New Covenant, just as it was the essential element of the old administrations of the Covenant of Grace. The New Covenant would not abolish the old but fulfill its ideals (Westminster Confession of Faith 19:7). God promised to marry His people and his powerful grace will ensure the marriage is successful and unbreakable.

Longer: The fulfillment of this promise **commenced** with the first coming of Christ, who is Immanuel (God with us). It **continues** to be fulfilled as His people live in a married relationship with Him (Eph. 5:22ff). But the full enjoyment of that marriage union will not be **consummated** until Christ's second coming (Rev. 19:6-9).

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

"I have an inner husband" (Isa. 54:5). Instead of the law coming from Sinai, the law comes from the Son. Instead of coming with thunder and lightning, it comes with grace and peace. Instead of the covenant form being largely legal, it is largely personal. In addition to the promises, we have the person.

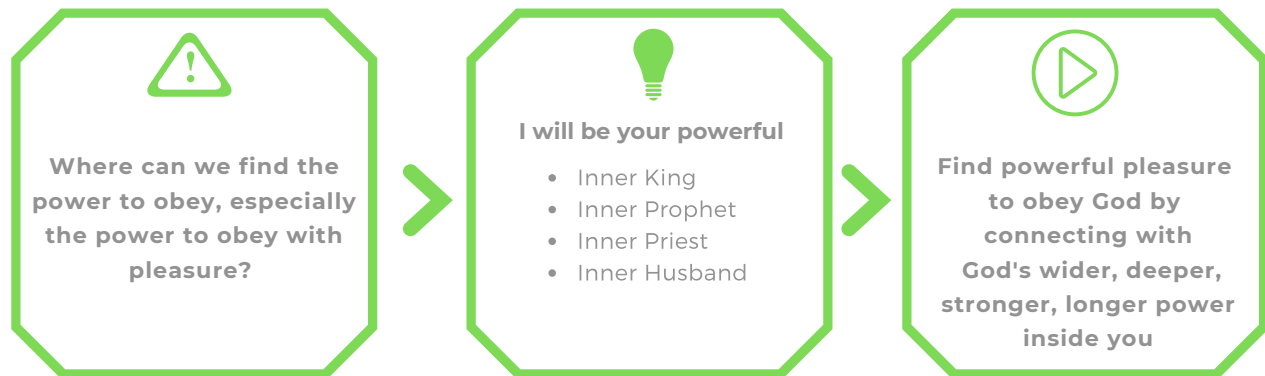
THE JUDGE IS OUR HUSBAND
OUR HUSBAND IS THE JUDGE



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



PRAYER: Great Covenanter, renew my happy obedience by reminding me of the portable resources you've put inside me by your grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What commandments have you found hard to obey or found no pleasure in obeying?
2. If 'new' means 'renewed' not 'brand new,' how does that affect the place of God's law in our lives.
3. What are the 'three C's' and how do they help you understand prophecy?
4. What are the three ways in which the New Covenant is superior to the Old?
5. How can you increase your power to obey and your pleasure in obedience?
6. How does this sermon change your view of the law?

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