

What Should I Do When I Don't Want To Obey

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Preacher: Reese Winkler

[0 : 00] And as I was thinking on what we should talk about today, I decided on a topic that is really close to my heart, which is typically what you do when you have little notice.

And this topic has to do with a simple question that I think many of us may not have the best answer to, or maybe the most well thought out answer to.

And that question is, what should I do when I don't want to obey? When I don't desire righteousness, when I don't desire the things of God, what do I do?

Do I simply will myself into obedience? What actions or what does the word say about a lack of obedience? Should I pretend like it's not there and just try to do better the next day, or is there something deeper that can be addressed in our hearts?

So before we open our text, the way that I'd like to frame this message is around a statement in answering that question, and then we'll kind of go through and unpack this statement as we go.

[1 : 06] So in response to the question, what should I do when I don't want to obey? Response. Worldly desires, whether habitual or momentary, can only be remedied by the work of the Holy Spirit as He renews our minds, changing our beliefs, values, and therefore actions, as He fills believers with His presence through the receiving of God's Word with faith.

So again, it can only be done by the work of the Spirit as He renews our mind, changing our beliefs, values, and therefore actions, as He fills believers with His presence through the receiving of God's Word with faith.

And we'll go through a couple of those points, and I'll be sure to repeat them as we go. So let's read our text for today and see what the Lord has to say on this topic.

So Colossians chapter 3, I'm going to be reading verses 1 through 17. Before we do that, I'd like to go to the Lord in prayer.

So y'all join me. Dear God, I thank You for this day. I thank You for Your Word, which is sufficient to accomplish everything that we need for life and for godliness.

[2 : 27] God, I pray that we would put our trust in it and in You. That we wouldn't trust in worldly philosophy, pop psychology, or even our own wisdom, but that we would seek Your will by looking at Your Word.

God, I pray that You would renew our minds even in this moment. That You would orient our hearts away from ourself, and that You would help us to seek after righteousness the way that You would have us seek after righteousness.

God, let us lay aside any weak excuses. Let us lay aside any justification of ourselves, and let us come to You humbly and ready to receive what You would have us to hear today.

Would You work effectively through me, Your servant. God, and would You accomplish the purpose that You intend for this congregation today.

So God, we love You. In your name we pray. Amen. Alright, so Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 17. And this is the Word of God.

[3 : 35] And it says, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 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. Here there is not Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

[4 : 58] 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 you were indeed 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 our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Okay, so our first point in the first part of this statement, the Spirit works to renew our minds.

The Spirit works to renew our minds. He does this in three specific ways that I see, as I read this text in others. He changes our beliefs, He changes our values, and therefore He changes our actions.

Now to understand this idea, we have to understand where our actions and desires actually come from. Actions are a result of values, which come from our beliefs.

[6 : 13] And so, when I'm using the word beliefs today, I'm primarily talking about little b belief. So, things that we believe to be true in a given period of time, not necessarily like saving belief or saving faith.

And this concept is found throughout the Scriptures. One example of this is in Luke 6, 43 through 45, and it reads, So, based off of what we treasure, that's what we produce, or that's what we do. Each action we take is an expression of what we think is best for us, most valuable, and worth treasuring in any given moment in time. So, every action that we take always can be traced back to a belief.

And now, we're not always conscious of this going on as we take actions no matter what it is, but each action that we take is a result of us thinking about and doing what we believe is the best thing for us to do in that given time.

Therefore, each time that we sin, we're communicating to God that our definition and understanding of what will be best for us is superior to His. So, this was the original temptation and sin in the garden.

[7 : 43] And if we think about our own sin, we'll find this to be true of us as well. That ultimately, each sin that we commit is a statement to God saying, in this moment, I believe that me sinning was better than your plan for my life, which you've commanded to us.

Right? So, in this way, every sin is an act of rebellion and also an act of unbelief, even if we don't recognize it in the moment. So, how does the Spirit renew our minds?

Firstly, the Spirit helps us to change our actions. And so, I'm kind of working backward from the outside, and the Spirit helps to change our actions.

And the prophet Ezekiel is talking about the new covenant that will come as a result of the Spirit indwelling God's people after Christ. He says in Ezekiel 36, So, as a result of the indwelling Spirit, we are caused, in one way or another, to walk in God's statutes.

Jesus speaks similarly in John chapter 14, verses 15 through 16. He says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I'll ask the Father, I'll ask the Father, and He will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.

[9 : 20] Okay? If you love me, you'll keep my commandments. I'll ask the Father, and He will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. Now, obviously, I hope it's obvious to you.

We don't do this in a perfect sense. Just because we have the Spirit of God doesn't mean we now obey perfectly. But, in some way or another, the Spirit being inside of us causes us and helps us to walk in the way that God wants us to walk.

When reading these passages, you may wonder how we can both maintain our free will and also be caused to walk in God's statutes. So, the way that this works, I'm not going to pretend like I know all

of the inner workings of this idea, but it is clear that somehow it does work.

So, we always have the free will to choose what we want to do. It's simply that what we want to do will change as God removes our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh.

So, again, we always have free will to choose what we want. It's just that what we want changes as we're given a new heart. So, this brings us to our second point. The Spirit works... Our second sub-point.

[10:31] The Spirit works to change our values and desires. How does the Spirit renew the mind? He works to cause us to obey. And the Spirit works to change our values and desires.

So, David ties this idea of God helping us obey with our values and desires in Psalm 37. So, let's turn there. Psalm 37, starting in verse 3. This is a psalm that's often misconstrued.

I hope that we can shed some light on its true meaning today. Psalm 37, verses 3 through 7. Trust in the Lord and do good.

Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Okay, so many take verse 4 by itself and use it to mean all types of things.

[11:38] Like, if you want a Ferrari, then delight yourself in the Lord and then God will give you the desires of your heart. A Ferrari. But I don't think that's quite what this passage is saying. As we believe the Lord is trustworthy, as we saw in verse 3, is who He says He is and therefore value Him, delighting ourselves in Him.

Once we believe what He says over what our flesh tempts us to believe, He will give us what we now desire. So once our delight is in Him, our desires change.

He goes on to say, commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and He will act. To do what? To bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday.

So He gives us now what we desire with a new heart delighted in the Lord, righteousness, faithfulness, and justice. Third sub-point, how does the Spirit renew our minds?

The Spirit helps us to change our thoughts or our little-be beliefs. So we're going to flip over to the parallel passage to ours from Colossians this morning as we look in Ephesians chapter 4, starting in verse 17.

[12:52] So flip back forward, Ephesians chapter 4, starting in verse 17. We'll see this a little bit more later on, but Paul, in many ways, is writing similar things to the church at Colossae and the church at Ephesus in these two letters.

And the more that you dig in to these two passages, the more you see how they line up together and the way that they line up has real significance for understanding this concept of what do we do when we don't want to obey.

Alright, so Ephesians 4, starting in verse 17. It says, Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way that you learn Christ. Assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off the old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[14:21] Okay, so this text shows us that futile, ignorant, godless, and callous minds produce sensuality, doing that which pleases the senses, impure practice, corrupt desires, and so forth.

So based off of what is in the mind, the thoughts, they produce actions. So futile, ignorant, godless minds produce futile, ignorant, godless actions.

So notice the solution though in this passage and others that we'll read. The solution is not simply to try harder, or the solution is not simply to change the behavior that that will come, but the solution is to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.

Then from our text this morning, Paul encourages us to set our mind on the things of above where Christ is seated. Having finished the work of destroying the power of sin by taking its consequences on himself, nailing our record of debt to the cross, and allowing us now to draw near to God as we've been studying in Hebrews.

So as we think about, as we set our mind, as we focus on Christ's finished work, then that produces a type of obedience in us. Paul believes as we shift our focus off of the things of this world, we'll then be able to put to death what is evil in us, as it says in verse 5, by putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge.

[15 : 51] So again, Paul believes as we shift our focus off of the things of this world, we'll then be able to put to death what is evil in us, by putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge.

Lastly, Paul tells us in the Roman believers, sorry, in the letter to the Roman believers, chapter 12, verse 2, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

So again, we are transformed in our outward action by the renewal of the mind, so that we can aptly decide what is good, acceptable, and perfect. Notice something in all three cases that the renewal of the mind is always spoken of in the passive tense.

So Paul is not saying here, renew your mind, he is saying, allow your mind to be renewed. And that begs the question, anytime you are using the passive voice in English, it takes away the agency.

So the question is, by whom? Who is doing? Or what is doing the renewing? And we will see that it is the Spirit of God. How does he do that? He fills us with his presence.

[17 : 04] So that brings us to our next point in our statement, the Spirit works by filling us with his presence. So let's skip down in Ephesians to chapter 5, verses 18 through 21.

As we are going, notice the similarities between this passage in Ephesians and Paul's letter from our original text in Colossians 3. So Ephesians 5, 18 through 21.

Again, another commonly misconstrued text. And it says, Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melodies to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So if I asked everyone, 50 people maybe, in this room what it meant to be filled with the Spirit, I would get a bunch of different answers. What our idea behind, what is this filling of the Spirit? And if I went outside of this church, I would get an even greater diversity of answers. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Many have an idea that's primarily mystical, emotional in nature, and extraordinary.

[18 : 29] Maybe the best word would be, we think of it as a spectacle that we put on a performance. But I believe there's a definitive answer to this question, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

But to understand it, we're going to have to do some work to reach a decent conclusion. In short, to be filled with the Spirit is to allow the Word of God to dwell in us richly.

Now, I know that those two themes may not seem like they're related, but we'll see as we look at our two passages together how this is indeed the case.

So, if you prefer the next part of our statement, God fills us with the Spirit as we receive His Word through faith. So, looking at this passage in Ephesians, we can see that in Paul's mind, being filled with the Spirit looks like at least a couple of things.

Seeing to and with other believers and to God looks like gratitude and it looks like submission to authority. Now, you may have read this unintentionally as Paul's giving a list because he kind of is in the middle of a list and so we have a tendency to keep going on that list.

[19 : 39] But notice when he says be filled with the Spirit and then it's followed by three participles and these participles in English they're adverbial phrases which means that it's modifying how we should be filled with the Spirit.

The three words be filled with the Spirit how addressing one another giving thanks and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. So they are connected and it's answering the question what does it look like or how should we be filled with the Spirit.

So as I've pointed out you've probably noticed several similarities between Paul's writing in Ephesians and in Colossians and these are not by accident. So let's flip back to our passage I know we're doing a lot of flipping but it is important for you to see.

So back to Colossians 3 in verse 16 it says 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 heart to God and whatever you do in a word or deed do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him and just like in Ephesians he goes on to talk about submission in various areas in family in our employment and then masters and slaves okay so in both cases we have these three indicators of what it looks like on the one hand to be filled with the spirit and on the other hand what it looks like to have the word of Christ dwell in us richly those three things singing gratitude and submission to authority so in

Paul's mind being filled with the spirit produces the same exact things as allowing the word of God to dwell in us richly if you're not quite convinced that these passages are truly so the deeper you dive the more similarities stick out these two passages mirror one another all the way back from Colossians 2:16 forward to chapter 4 verse 1 which mirrors Ephesians 4:14 all the way through 6:9 both passages are describing what the new life should look like in comparison with the old both begin by warning against false doctrine and a command to hold fast to Christ as the head of the body they go on to encourage readers to put off the old self characterized by callous minds and hard hearts producing anger sensuality greed and impure talk and to put on the new self which is being renewed in the likeness or in the knowledge of

[22:29] God both passages as we've seen emphasize the role of the renewed mind in producing new action and they both lead to on us richly and to be filled with the Holy Spirit there's a lot more similarities than that just a quick few for notes John Piper writes of these two passages together and I'll try to read this well it's kind of a lengthy quote if we want more of the Spirit of God we must hear more of the Word of God with faith we must hear its promises see their blood bought certainty value their goodness and bank on them that is why sorry that is the way God supplies more of the Spirit the command in Ephesians be filled with the Spirit is parallel with the command in Colossians let the word of!

richly with faith in other words not only does the first act of faith come by hearing but all subsequent acts of faith come by hearing the fullness of the Spirit comes by an ongoing hearing of the word of God so Paul's writing in Galatians chapter 3 supports this perspective I think this is the last place we'll turn today just a couple of pages Galatians 3 verse 2!

And I have to admit before studying this passage I've read this one in particular a bunch of times but I've never thought about Galatians 3 in this way it's a joy to be enlightened by it Galatians 3:2 through 5 says let me ask you only this did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith are you so foolish having begun by the spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh did you suffer so many things in vain if indeed it was in vain does he who supplies the spirit to you and works of miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith so I think the reason why I've missed it missed this particular point is because a it's a series of questions and b because it doesn't explicitly say hearing the word of

God with faith but if you look back on it that's exactly what the implication is we hear the word of God with faith and we're saved and then again he's saying we hear the word statements it becomes a little bit more clear we are perfected and sanctified by God supplying the spirit which comes to us through hearing the word of God with faith in the same block of Jesus' teaching we read earlier which said those who love me will obey my commandments and I will send my helper describes the spirit's role in this way in John chapter 16 in verse 13 he says when the spirit of truth comes he will take what is mine and declare it to you so the spirit's role is using the word to exalt

Christ by declaring it to us as we receive it through faith so we saw earlier that the renewal of the mind was passive in some ways that it's something that we are renewed as we're doing some type of activity and while God is the one renewing and transforming we are the ones who draw near to him through his word and actively seek to believe it with faith James reminds us in chapter four of his letter that if we draw near to God he will draw near to us the writer of Hebrews thoughts and intentions of our heart so as we approach the word of God through personal study through song lyrics through preaching or as it is brought to our memory by the spirit and we believe it and allow it to soak into us the lies we were believing beforehand are replaced with the truth we no longer value the temporary pleasure of sin over the abiding satisfaction of obedience we will no longer see

[27:14] God as he shows us what will lead to joy and flourishing in our lives the anxieties of everyday life are overshadowed with a bigger perspective where God is in control and not us he's working for the purity of his people for the sake of his name which isn't always convenient or easy for us now there are not many things in the Christian life that are formulaic in nature but in some ways genuine heartfelt obedience is doesn't mean it's easy but it tells us what we need to do we

know God always empowers what he commands and I believe that what we have spoken of today is largely the methodology he expects for us to utilize so let's look at some simple points of application to help us to know what to do so that we can desire obedience so first point of application see your sin as a belief value and a thought problem not simply a behavior problem this means when we find ourselves in sin or even in temptation we should identify the faulty or the tempting belief we should write it down or tell someone that we're struggling to believe what

God says in his word about a particular issue we should memorize specific passages! that you can go to and reflect on in the midst of this temptation so again if sin is a belief problem then we need to address our unbelief secondly we should receive his word with faith an assumption built into all of this is that we'll be going to the word often many of us wonder why we continue to fight and struggle with the same sins whether it be anxiety lust or pride and yet aren't taking up the means that God has given us to fight these battles thirdly we should seek to be renewed the assumption should be that we are usually in a state of drifting away from the truth back towards selfishness towards simple orientation which is why we are in need of renewal in the first place so to do this we must approach the scripture with a desire to grow more and more into the image of God this comes by removing our sinful areas which hurts and which many of us are not prepared for this kind of encounter when we approach the word this type of approach to be changed and to be renewed it takes hard work it takes time it takes consistency it takes intentionality just like everything else that satisfying!

life but it will indeed bear much fruit and lastly fourthly we need to have an attitude of preparation and not an attitude of reaction so have an attitude of preparation not of reaction if we wait until we're in the middle of the battle to put on our armor we're likely to lose the battle we have to be prepared for the battle that we know is going to be at hand we need daily regular!

mind renewal if we are to prepare for the daily battle towards righteousness so may we be people of the word who regularly draw near to God have our minds renewed by the realities of the gospel and who we are as children of God may this activity produce the fruit of righteousness in us as the very spirit of God works to change our desires our thoughts and our actions as we strive after joy let's pray together