



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

THE OBEDIENT LIFE

NOTES

Introduction

At the very heart of the Christian's life and discipleship to Jesus is the matter of obedience. From the very beginning, when God first created man in His image with the power of choice, obedience has been a real issue.

When Eve disobeyed God, it was with the intent of becoming more like God. Satan said:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

(Genesis 3:5)

Eve found out the hard way that when we disobey God, we don't become like Him. We just become disobedient children. In Eve's attempt to defend herself before God, she said:

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

(Genesis 3:13)

Satan certainly had deceived her with his lies. Thinking she would profit from her disobedience, she had disobeyed what she knew was God's command. The exact opposite had happened; there was no profit at all, only loss. Tragically, Satan is still deceiving Christians today into thinking that something can be gained from disobeying God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Definition of Obedience

Obedience is a willingness to be subject to the will of another. For the Christian this means being subject to the laws and commands of God.

Many times people mistakenly assume that because God has given them the freedom of choice, they may choose whether or not to obey. They think that if they are not in subjection to someone else, they are independent. This is not true. The choice we have is not **whether** or not we are going to obey someone—but **whom** we are going to obey. The Bible tells us that to whatever we yield ourselves or offer ourselves, to that we are a slave.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?
(Romans 6:16)

Just because God made us with the ability to choose does not mean that we are to be free moral agents. We have been created to **obey**. We will therefore obey someone or something—whether for evil or for good.

Jesus' Example

As we examine the life of the Lord Jesus, we can see that He obeyed God perfectly in everything He did.

He Came to do God's Will

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

(John 6:38)

He Did Nothing of His Own Initiative

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

(John 8:28)

He Was Willing to Pay Any Price to Obey

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

(Hebrews 5:8)

His Obedience Had No Limits

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

(Philippians 2:8)

In Jesus' lifetime He was tested to the limits, but He remained obedient to God. Because of this kind of commitment, Satan could not trick or deceive Him as he had Eve. In Jesus' encounters with Satan, God always delivered Him. Christ resisted:

- The world and its attractions,
- The flesh and its appetites,
- The devil and his lies.

If Christ had disobeyed JUST ONCE, He would have been guilty and would not have been the perfect sacrifice necessary for atonement. Christ's victory over sin and death is intricately dependent upon His absolute obedience to God's will.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

(Hebrews 5:8-9)

The Importance of Obedience

Obedience—The Expression of Faith

Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey.

These familiar lines to the old hymn have been sung by Christians for decades. They express a basic truth of the victorious Christian life; faith and obedience are two sides of the same coin. We can't have one without the other.

Genuine faith in Christ always expresses itself in obedience to His commands. Obedience puts legs on our faith—it takes faith out of the theoretical and puts it into the everyday fiber of life. Simple obedience to what God says proves that we believe what He says and are willing to act upon it—whether or not it makes us accepted in the eyes of the world.

In Hebrews 11, the great chapter on faith, we see a consistent pattern in each verse—**by faith** someone **did** something.

Consider the following examples:

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

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

(Hebrews 11:11)

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

(Hebrews 11:17)

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

(Hebrews 11:33-34)

Obedience—Very Important to God

Obedience is of supreme importance to God. It is far more important to Him than our words or our religion.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

(1 Samuel 15:22-23)

Because our obedience is so important to God, He conditions many of His promises and blessings upon it. It is therefore very expedient for us to obey because God's hand of blessing is upon us when we do. Jesus said that those who hear and obey God's Word are like a wise man who builds his house upon a rock. He is blessed with security, stability and safety. However, the man who does not obey ends in calamity.

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

(Luke 6:47-49)

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

(Proverbs 1:29-33)

When the children of Israel got ready to enter the Promised Land, God had Moses draw them into what is often referred to as the Mosaic Covenant. Possession of the Promised Land was contingent upon their obedience to God. If they were disobedient, they would be driven out of the land, and their enemies would possess it. This is a picture for us of what the victorious Christian life is like. We are brought into the Christian life through rebirth, but we can only enjoy the blessings of God through obedience to His commands. Many Christians, though assured of eternal life, are failing to see God's reality and blessing because of disobedience.

Obedience—Vital to Abiding in Christ

We often hear sermons about **abiding in Christ**, but far too often we go home wondering how a person goes *about* abiding. One of the most important aspects of abiding is simple obedience to Christ.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

(John 15:10)

Abiding through obedience is extremely important because:

- ***You can't bear fruit without abiding.***

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

(John 15:4)

- ***You bear much fruit through abiding.***

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

(John 15:5)

- ***You wither up without abiding obedience.***

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

(John 15:6)

- ***You are assured of answered prayer through abiding.***

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

(John 15:7)

Obedience—Makes You a Blessing to Others

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

(Genesis 22:15-18)

Abraham's obedience in this situation touched the heart of God in a significant way. God not only blessed him for it, but made him a blessing to the entire world.

It is always an encouragement to others to see an obedient Christian living the life. It is a challenge and gives hope that victory in daily living can be a reality. Think of people you know who have really been a blessing to you personally. Chances are that one of the key ingredients in that person's life is obedience to God. God wants to do the same with you. Will you obey Him?

Attitudes Toward Obedience

Our attitudes greatly determine the outcome of our obedience. The Pharisees were masters of **obedience** to the law, but their attitudes and motives were wrong. The result was they created God in their own image rather than allowing God to mold and create them into His image. Following are some important attitudes we should have in obedience.

Willingness

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

(Psalms 40:8)

Wholeheartedness

This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

(Deuteronomy 26:16)

Courage

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

(Joshua 1:7)

Promptness

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

(Psalms 119:60)

Humility

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

(1 Peter 5:5-6)

Promises and Blessing of Obedience

The Bible is a story of the promises and blessings of obedience and of the tragedies of disobedience. A few of the promises are as follows. You will discover many more each day as you read the Word of God.

And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and

the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

(Deuteronomy 11:13-15)

Answered Prayer

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

(John 15:7)

Stability and Peace

But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

(Proverbs 1:33)

Growth in Godliness

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

(1 Peter 1:22)

Whom We Are to Obey

In Scripture we are instructed to be subject to other people whom God has placed in an authority structure over us. We cannot obey God without obeying those He has placed over us for our protection and welfare. Some of these authorities are listed below.

Spiritual Leaders

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

(Hebrews 13:7)

Governmental Leaders

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

(Romans 13:1)

Parents

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
(Ephesians 6:1)

Masters (Employers)

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

(Ephesians 6:5-8) +

Wives to Husbands

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

(Ephesians 5:22-24)

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