

Obedience To God

There is a great need in the religious world today to recognize the importance of obeying God. Obedience is submitting to law. So obedience to God is a willing submission to God's law (His commands).

We are saved when we obey His law. Many people in the world believe they are saved based on false premises. Some think they are saved based upon the fact that they believe. Understand, however, that just a mental acknowledgment of Christ is not enough to get you into heaven. James tells us that "the demons also believe, and shudder" (2:19) but does anyone think that they will be in heaven. There are those who think that they are obedient to God because they have "placed membership" at a church of their choosing. Is that really all it takes? What about those who think that they must be obedient based on the feelings that they have? Should we be willing to let our emotions dictate our spiritual destiny?

Let's look at some things regarding disobedience and obedience. We will always get a good understanding of a topic when we look at examples in the scriptures.

Disobedience In The Old Testament

Disobedience always will be rewarded with a just compensation. It may not always be in this life but we can be assured that it will come. Men who disobeyed Moses' law more often than not had to suffer physical consequences of their disobedience. Let's look at some specific cases:

Saul's disobedience. The command of the Lord in I Samuel 15 was for King Saul to "go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him..." (vs.3). The command to Saul was very clear. He didn't have to go away, sit down, and try and figure out what the Lord had said. He knew! When Saul got back, he seemed convinced of a successful mission. **I Sam. 15:13, "...Blessed are you of the Lord! I have carried out the command of the Lord."** Samuel's reaction tells us something different, however. Notice vs. 14, *"What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"* Samuel thought it strange that if Saul carried out the command that he could hear all of these animals in the background. If Saul would have truly carried out the Lord's command in utterly destroying all that the Amalekites had there would not have been anything to hear. Saul also says to Samuel that he spared the king of Amalek. He goes on to explain in vs. 21, *"But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal."* Saul thought that because these things would be used to worship God that it would be alright in God's sight. He was gravely mistaken. Look at Samuel's response in vs. 22, *"Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."* Obedience is better than sacrifice. The important thing was for Saul to be obedient to God. The consequence of Saul's disobedience was severe, his throne was taken away

from Him just as he had rejected God's command (vs. 26).

Achan's sin at Jericho. When Israel went up to fight against the city of Jericho they were told that *"all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord."* (Joshua 6:19). They were not to take anything. Achan, however, took some of these things. Because of this, the Lord's anger burned against the sons of Israel (7:1). When Israel went up against the city of Ai, they were unable to take it. The reason for this was on account of Achan's sin. The consequences of his disobedience was great. 36 men of Israel were killed trying to take Ai and Achan along with his sons, daughters, oxen, donkeys, sheep, tent, all that belonged to him, and the things he stole were stoned and burned with fire. All because Achan did not listen to the Lord.

Obedience In The New Testament

The Lord saves those who obey Him. **Hebrews 5:8-9**, *"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation"*

Obedience to Christ must be from the heart. *"...you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed."* (Romans 6:17). There must be a willing submission to the Lord's will. One may obey the Lord from the pressure of some circumstance but this is not true obedience. His obedience is prompted by the wrong motives and is therefore unacceptable to God. Parents may put pressure on their children to become Christians and the result is someone who has gone through the motions but was never fully convicted. This person is not right before God because he/she has not obeyed from the heart. One must obey because they have the desire to be right with God.

One must respond to God's word, but there must be action in obedience. James says to *"prove yourselves doers of the word, and not hearers only."* (James 1:22).

Obedience To God Is Not:

A mere promise to obey – It doesn't matter if we have good intentions or not. Someone who is "going to do" something, still has not yet done it. We must stop planning to be obedient and just do it!

Responding to the traditions and commandments of men – We must make sure that we are obeying God the way He has designed and not some other way. Man has devised all kinds of ways that he believes is appropriate obedience. None of man's ways are acceptable. The Pharisee's in Jesus' day were putting their commandments and traditions over God's law and Jesus rightly called them hypocrites (Matthew 15:7-9). They were teaching their doctrine as God's commandments.

Doing only a part of what God requires – Obeying part of God's commandments

didn't work for Saul (I Sam. 15) and it won't work for us today either. Jesus said that the only one who would make it to heaven would be the one who did the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). It is not the one who did most of it or almost did it all but the one who does God's will. In the great commission, Jesus told his disciples that they were to teach others to observe "all" that He had commanded them (Matthew 28:18-20).

If men expect God to save them, we must do our part. Our part lies in our obedience to Christ. Christ is the source and the only way we can get to heaven (Hebrews 5:8-9; Acts 4:12). Have you done your part? You can by having faith or belief in the Son of God (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repenting of your sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confessing Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32; Matthew 16:16-17; Example: Acts 8:37), and being buried in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21; Acts 8:36-39).

– Shane Williams