

29 May 2011

Obedience Part 1

Today we start a new series on the word *obedience* or *obey*. The word *obedience* according to the Oxford dictionary means “*submission to another’s rule, compliance with law or command...surrender of one’s will to another’s without co-operation, also compliance with commands, irrespective of their nature.*”

In this teaching we will consider four points that include.

1. Man is called to obey God.
2. If we chose not to obey God there are eternal consequences.
3. In the church age we are to obey the gospel.
4. Once saved we are to obey the teachings of Paul.

Let us add a little substance to our points.

1. Man is called to obey God.

Deut 13:4 *Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.*

See also Ex 23:21 & 22, Deut 27:10, 30:2, 8 & 20.

From Adam, to Abraham, to Moses to David through to the church age, every man is commanded to obey God. There have always been those men who chose to obey the Lord and those who chose not to obey Him.

Abraham obeyed God

Gen 26:5 *Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

See also Gen.22: 1-12, Heb 11:8.

When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his own son on the altar, he laid his son on the altar and took a knife to slay him. That's obedience!

Would you slay your only son in obedience to the Lord?

Moses obeyed God

See Ex.4: 4 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand...*

Moses was obedient to God but had moments where he did not submit to God's instruction, perhaps out of frustration at the children of Israel (see Numb.20: 8-11).

The nation of Israel were generally a stiffnecked people.

Ex 32:9 *And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it [is] a stiffnecked people:*

See also; Ex 33:3, 5 & 34:9, Deut 9:6 & 13, 10:16, 2Chr 30:8 & Acts 7:51.

But they had individuals, like Moses, Joshua, David and even the whole congregation, from time to time, obey God and his spokesperson (see Ex.24: 3). Think about David for a moment. He was a man whose heart was perfect before God (see 1Kgs.11: 4), but the Scriptures record David sinned and disobeyed the commandments of God (see 2Sam12: 9-13).

The heathen Pharaoh was to obey God

Ex 5:2 *And Pharaoh said, Who [is] the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.*

In Paul's encounter with the Lord on the Damascus road, he was required to obey the Lord. Paul was told to arise and go into the city and there be told what he must do (see Acts 9: 3-6), and he did it! What does it mean for men throughout the centuries to obey God? It means they are to submit to his will. Just like Abraham, Moses, David and Paul and many others. God spoke they submitted to His will. As we have seen, even some of the great men like Moses who were obedient most of the time, still had their moments of doing rebellion. And in this, the church age, it is no different, we all have a choice to either obey God or disobey him.

2. If we chose not to obey God there are eternal consequences.

2Thes 1:8-9 *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.*

See also Rom 2:8, 1Pet 4:17

According to the verses above, God will judge those who chose not to obey Him, and in this the church age, in particular, the gospel of Christ crucified.

About a month ago there was an opportunity to preach the gospel on the street and have three, year 12 students film the preaching for a documentary they were doing on preaching. During one of the sessions the preacher warned those who walked by about God's punishment, God's vengeance on those who reject the gospel and someone else decided to tell the preacher not to put God in a false light. He objected to warning people about what he considered was outside of what God was capable of doing...punishing the Christ rejecting heathens for an eternity in hell.

When the man was taken to one side after the filming had finished it was evident that he had been a believer who went into depression because the thought of his friends and family that chose to reject Christ, going to hell for an eternity because they believe not. He could not handle the consequences they would have to suffer, hence he ended up where he was today, rejecting eternal punishment, but accepting that God was a God of love, and that was all. His point was, if hell really exists, then how can any believer bear the thought of their family or friends who reject the Lord, ending up in hell because they chose to disobey God and believe not in his Son?

The explanation went some like this:

God gives each of us a choice and no one can drag their family members or friends to the cross and make them believe. Its a bit like someone dragging a horse to water to drink. You might be able to drag the horse to the water troff but you cannot physically make it drink the water. The same is with the making people believe the gospel of Christ crucified, it doesn't work like that. Believe according to the bible belief occurs in a man's heart (Rom.10: 9-10) and the Holy Spirit of God convicts man of sin, in righteousness and in judgment (see Jn16: 7-11). We are responsible for sowing the seeds of the gospel, for warning the heathen, but not for making sure they get saved. there is where the Emperor Constantine forced his subjects to become Christians (whether they were or not is not part of this study). We are to warn our families and friends, and sow seeds that the Holy Spirit would cause those seeds to germinate. That explanation was not good enough for him.

In retrospect perhaps we could have mentioned that God is both just and gracious, and he MUST punish sin...he cannot leave the debt for sin unpaid. In Christ, God is both just and the justifier of them which believe. And he does not want any to perish but that all should come to repentance (see 2Pet.3: 9). But as we know, the way to eternal life is narrow and there be few that find it (see Matt.7: 14), and the rest, those who reject Christ, are blinded by the devil and will end up paying for their sin for an eternity in hell, where they will suffer the consequences of rejecting Christ, of believing not, of disobeying God. But that is what the bible teaches, and that is what the preacher is to warn the heathen of, and we are to share with our families.

Karen and I watched a movie on Saturday evening called *Polar Storm*, and in the movie there is a threat of polar storms destroying the earth and everyone on it. There is a learned man who tries to warn the authorities but they won't listen, then his wife and son get put in a church where the army has told everyone they will be safe, but are in the line for more polar storms (according to the husband). The wife warns the officer in charge and he cannot reach his commander so, on the basis of his previous instruction, he choses not to believe the warning. the woman then stands up in the church and warns everyone that is there, that their life is endanager if they stay in the church building. The army chief, takes her off of the stage and she escapes with her son and two others who believe her warning. The story continues with the woman, her son and the other two driving off, then stopping for the polar storm to pass. The next couple of scenes you see the church being hit by the storm and everyone is fried and dies.

The woman felt real bad for those in the church as she drove off, but really, she had done all she could do. With the most up to date knowledge of the danger, she spoke out and warned those people, who were going to die, but they chose to believe the army bosses, whom they reasoned would tell them if their was a danger, but they did not know the facts. And nor do those ministers in the main stream churches who ignore the biblical warning of hell and neglect to pass on that warning to those they meet. They are just like the army boss in command at the church and had lost contact with his commanding office back at the church...he did not have all the facts, he had lost contact with his commander. Let each one of us be earnest in warning non-believers of the consequences of disobeying God, let us be fervent, let us put ourselves out there and warn people about God's judgement of sin and disobedience.

3. In the church age we are to obey the gospel.

2Thes 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

See also 1Pet 1:22

The first part of obedience is belief. Before we can obey the gospel, or perhaps, as part of obeying it, we must first believe it. We can't obey God, if we do not believe he exists.

When we believe the gospel of Christ crucified we get saved and then we are called to obey the gospel.

Then we are called to live of the gospel (1Cor.9: 14), we are to walk according to the truth of the gospel (see Gal.2: 14).

Read Gal.2: 14. Here Paul is rebuking Peter for walking contrary to the grace of the gospel. Peter, who was a Jew, after he got saved, lived after the manner of the Gentiles, but he was teaching the Gentiles who get saved, to live as according to the Jewish laws.

When Karen and I attended a Messianic congregation they struggled with God's grace that is available to the Jew (as it is the Gentile) and so they were instructing the Gentiles to obey the law of Moses. Eventually the teaching of Paul, then the teaching of Jesus were only a commentary on the teachings of the Old Testament, and more particularly, the Torah (first five books of the bible). We wrote a letter to the elders pointing out that they had walked away from the Lord Jesus Christ. We got back a 13 page letter from the elders which rejected our claims. I have never read the letter to this day, but the glances of its content indicate they did not agree with our points. About 6 months later we heard that the elders had dissolved the church and some had gone to the local Jewish Synagogue and others back to traditional churches.

Obedience to God doesn't stop just because we are saved by God's grace. Just because we know we are going to heaven when we die, we don't strive to sin or rebel against God. And so, obedience to the gospel is yearly, monthly, daily, hourly task. Read Romans 6, for now verse 15 & 16 *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid. 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.*

So after we get saved, after we have believed the gospel of Christ crucified, we are then called to obedience unto righteousness, not obedience unto sin.

Let each one of us ask the Lord of help to yield ourselves servants to obedience unto the gospel.

4. Once we are saved we are to obey the teachings of Paul.

2Thes 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

See also, Rom.6: 17

So again we learn the need for obedience to God. Whereas God's conveyed his commandments to Israel through Moses, we understand from the New Testament that the Lord Jesus Christ uses the apostle Paul to convey His message to the Gentiles (see Rom.11: 13, 1Tim.2: 7 & 2Tim.1: 11). And so Paul received understanding to things which had previously only been a mystery (see Rom,16: 25 & Eph.6: 29 READ).

Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles instructed the churches to obey his teachings (see 1Cor.4: 16, 11: 1 & Phil.3: 17), and so Paul is the spokesperson to the church...the one we should seek to obey. Churches today, however, tend to focus on the teachings of Jesus and seek to obey them. And that is fine...to a point. But in seeking to obey Paul's teaching on right division (see 2Tim.2: 15), do we in the church age follow Jesus and:

- a) Preach the kingdom of heaven (Mt.4: 17)
- b) Offer a gift as Moses commanded (Mt.8: 4)

No, I don't think any Christian today would do something in obedience to the teaching of Moses, if it contradicted the gospel, although the Jehovah Witness and the Roman Catholics preach the Kingdom of heaven. But I guess it is bound to happen if a corrupt text is used as the authority.

Try talking to a Jehovah Witness about the gospel of Christ crucified and he will inevitably reject the teachings of Paul to the church and align himself with Jesus and his preaching of the Kingdom of heaven. Its not that Jesus, our Saviour and Lord was wrong, heaven forbid, but that he was preaching and teaching in a different age to a different audience. He did not preach about his death and resurrection (the mystery that was revealed to Paul), because if he had Satan would have known about it, whereas it was a mystery to Satan, as it was to Jesus' disciples, even when he told them about what he would encounter, they still did not understand him (see Mk.9: 31 & 32, Lk.9: 44 & 45).

Let us who are saved seek to obey the teachings of the apostle Paul and obey his gospel.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again.

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