

PRESENT TRUTH

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For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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The Obedience Factor

Art Nelson

Introduction

Obedience is something that we seem to hear less and less about within the Institutional Church and even among those outside of the Institutional Church. When obedience is discussed the question often arises, “what are the requirements?” The answer is usually given as a set of rules which are to be obeyed. However, how does that differ from the Old Testament Law? Our obedience is not to a set of commands, laws, or rules carved in stone. Our obedience is a matter of the heart and arises from us obeying the laws written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Why does it seem so hard to do that? Why do we keep coming back to outward laws to discipline the flesh? Paul told us in Galatians 3:21 that no law can produce life. Jesus came so that we might have life even life more abundant (John 10:10).

The law takes us into custody, “*But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.*” (Galatians 3:23 NASB), however, we can be released from custody, “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*” (Romans 8:2 NASB)

So, as we discuss obedience in this lesson, we are not talking about obeying a set of laws or rules and regulations as applied by our modern day pharisees, but, rather, that desire to obey the will of the Lord which arises in our heart as we mature in Him.

Obedience and the Kingdom

Jesus made it very clear that entering the Kingdom involves more than just believing in Him. It also requires obedience.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (Matthew 7:21 NASB)

Jesus goes on to say in verse 23 that those who will not enter “practice lawlessness”. One who is lawless is one who is not obedient to the law giving no heed to its requirements. These are those

who are doing the desires of their own heart and not the desires of the Holy Spirit that is being written on their hearts.

We have reduced the requirements of God to a passive belief, ignoring the Scriptures that speak differently.

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36 NASB)

The literal Greek says "he who does not believe unto obedience will not see life". Our belief cannot be passive. If we don't believe unto obedience we haven't believed. Passive belief is no different than the belief of the demons as James says.

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (James 2:19-20 NASB)

The demons certainly don't "believe unto obedience" since they continually disobey God. James goes on to speak of "faith without works", which is the obedience factor of believing. Without it, James says, faith is useless!

Obedience and Jesus

We know from the Scriptures that Jesus completely obeyed the Father. Jesus said on several occasions that He only did what He saw the Father doing and He only said what He saw the Father saying. However, we don't always recognize that Jesus' ability to obey the Father was not something that He brought with Him from heaven but, instead, was a learned behavior.

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8 NASB)

Why was it necessary that Jesus *learn* obedience? Because Adam was disobedient, Jesus as the second man, the last Adam, had to be obedient *as a man* listening to the voice of God. We see the importance of this when we see the results of the obedience of Jesus.

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (Hebrews 5:9 NASB)

The word "perfect" here in the original means "mature, having completed the course of training". That is what Jesus did through suffering—He completed His training course of obedience and as a result He became the source of eternal salvation, not to all men, but *to those who obey Him*.

Notice the verse does not say "to those who believe in Him or on Him", but to those who obey Him. Are we guilty of watering down the requirements to the point that we give a false security to people who profess belief but who don't "believe unto obedience"? Have we neglected to teach believers that we learn obedience in the same way that Jesus did—by suffering?

It appears that God recognizes two classes of people that fit into the category of those who will receive retribution when He returns as it says in Second Thessalonians 1:8:

1. those who do not know Him, and
2. those who do not obey Him

For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 NASB)

Obedience and Us

As we have seen, we too must learn obedience. If we do so then we will not fall under the retribution of the Lord when He returns. Punishment of disobedience is held in abeyance until we become completely obedient.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NASB)

Obedience is one of the divinely powerful weapons of our warfare that enable us to pull down fortresses and speculations and every other thing that is against God. If God punished all disobedience now, many believers that are seeking to become obedient would fall under that punishment because our obedience is not yet complete.

The world to come is not subject to Angels (Hebrews 2:5) but subject to the new creation—the sons of God, that is, us. The world to come is subject to Jesus and those who overcome. Do we really think that the disobedient will be ruling anything? Our obedience factor now determines our place and function in the world to come.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB)

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. (Hebrews 2:1 NASB)

Yes! Let us pay much closer attention to what we have heard the Lord say. Let us become obedient to the voice of the Lord.

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For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com

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