



WEEK 7 - Obedience

There's a wonderful book by two psychologists called *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*. In the book they write about how parenting has changed over the years.

“When a group of 1920s mothers listed the traits they wanted their children to have, they named strict obedience, loyalty to church, and good manners. In 1988, few mothers named these traits; instead, they chose independence and tolerance. A larger nationwide study that traced parental attitudes through 2004 found

similar results. It asked, “If you had to choose, which thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him (or her) for life?” The five choices are “to obey,” “to be well-liked or popular,” “to think for himself or herself,” “to work hard,” and “to help others when they need help.” Some things are constant: American parents have always ranked “to think for himself or herself” as the most important. Back in 1958, however, people said that the second most important thing a child could learn was “to obey.” Not anymore. Throughout the 1980s and ’90s, the importance of obedience steadily declined until it was ranked second to last. The ranking of obedience reached an all-time low in 2004, the last year for which data are available.”

- **The problem with permissive parenting is that we often project upon God our own human traits.**

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

I bring this up because today’s topic is obedience. Now, I’m going to say this seven different ways throughout this sermon, so this is today’s big idea: Obedience is tied to relationship.

You can’t be obedient to God if you’re not in a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

And once you know God as your Father, once you’re in a relationship with the Lord, that relationship is what drives our obedience.

Relationship drives obedience the same way that love brings sacrifice. When you love someone you don’t mind making great sacrifices for them.

To look at obedience today, we’re going to parallel the OT with the NT regarding this subject. We’re going to superimpose Deuteronomy over 1 John. But we’re going to begin in...

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

11 “For this **commandment** that I **command** you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.

Obedience is not beyond them. Therefore, if we as Christians have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, obedience is certainly not beyond us.

12 **It** is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring **it** to us, that we may hear **it** and do **it**?’

Anything that God commands is His will. Any word he utters is law. All he’s saying is that the command (or God’s will) is not hidden somewhere in heaven that a special person must go and retrieve it for us. In other words, God’s will has been plainly revealed to them and to us.

13 Neither is **it** beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring **it** to us, that we may hear **it** and do **it**?’

Notice, hearing and obeying are always tied together.

What he’s saying here is, “Ignorance is no excuse.” God’s will is plain. It is not hidden. It is not secret. No one has to go to heaven to receive it. No one has to cross the ocean to bring it back. So, where is it?

14 But **the word** is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

First, he ties hearing the word and obeying the word. Now, he adds to hearing and obeying — the heart. Once the word is in their heart, they can do it. Sounds a bit like being born again, doesn’t it?

The point being — it’s right in front of you, so that you can do it. Again, God’s will is not hidden.

Isaiah 45:19

19 I did not speak in secret,
in a land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
‘Seek me in vain.’
I the Lord speak the truth;
I declare what is right.

- **God’s will rant | Water polo league**

Deuteronomy 30:15-16

15 “See, I have set before you today **life and good**, death and evil.

He set before them life. Now we know who the life is — Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. Moses is telling them that if they

believe God they will live. They will have a new heart and keep His commandments. If they refuse? The wages of sin is death. So, life and good or death and evil. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. How did they receive spiritual life then? By faith. How do we receive it now? By faith.

16 If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God,

Notice that obeying is tied to this loving relationship. Let us make no mistake about it — God always initiates the relationship. We love Him because He first loved us. Don't think that by choosing life they or you have done something noble. It is by the initiative of God's Spirit always and forever.

“The Bible makes it plain that the work of God can be stopped and set back by sin. Thus, although it is true that faith is the gift of God, we read, ‘He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief’ (Matt. 13:58). Similarly, Christians are warned: ‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit’ (Eph. 4:30); ‘Do not quench the Spirit’ (1 Thess. 5:19). However mysterious the fact, the work of God may be hindered or even destroyed by our conduct (Rom. 14:20; Gal. 5:15).” (Iain Murray)

“God's act does not follow man's, rather the divine and human agency are conjoined so that we find that what is required of man is also attributed to God. God gives a new hearts (Ezek. 36:26) yet he commands, ‘Get yourselves a new heart’ (Ezek. 18:31). The spiritual resurrection of the sinner is God's work (Eph. 2:5), yet we read, ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light (Eph. 5:14). Repentance and faith are both stated to be God's gifts, and yet both are also represented as being the duty of sinners.” (Iain Murray)

The reason we are often disobedient as Christians is simply a lack of love for God. Our love has grown cold. That's what this series has been about, renewing our first love. And that loving relationship is displayed...

by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

So, if you love God, then you shall live.

Love = walking in His ways.

Walking in His ways = keeping His commandments and His statutes and rules.

How do we obey? First, by loving God. The first step in loving God was the same for them as it is for us — believe Him. They were saved by faith alone as we are. And in your trust of God you find a loving relationship. **Obedience is grounded in loving relationship.**

When parents ask their child to obey, very often the child obeys because they both fear the consequences — if they have been taught there are consequences to behavior — and also because they respect the authority of their parents in the healthy sense that they know their parents can carry out the threatened discipline. Finally, the child obeys because they trust that their parents love them. Without this loving trust, there is no obedience.

When we love God, we obey God. In the Old Testament, they obeyed the same way we do — first by faith. They trusted God, because God showed Himself trustworthy and then once they experienced His trustworthiness, they loved Him. When they loved Him, they obeyed Him.

We love Him because He first loved us. He makes Himself known to us. He shows us He is trustworthy, because you will not obey someone that you do not trust.

- J. Edwin Orr story about “God provides all of our needs” — he said as a young man who launched into itinerant ministry trusting God to provide for him and his widowed mother, “It’s best I find out now.”

Yet, there is an if/then promise in obedience. If you obey, then you will experience life. In the New Testament, we find this same idea explained more fully.

Obedience doesn’t give you life. It shows you that you have life. You don’t obey to get spiritual life. You obey because you have spiritual life. If you have no spiritual life, you can’t obey. Try to make a dead person obey anything. They can’t.

1 John 2:3-6

3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his **commandments**.

This is how you know your conversion is legitimate. How do you know you've become a Christian? Well, after you prayed to receive Christ, after you acknowledged Christ as Savior and Lord, did you do anything because Jesus said to do it?

Now, our knowledge always outpaces our obedience, but as you read the Bible or heard a sermon, did you apply something that you heard? That's all he's saying. That's why baptism is always a good first step, because in the New Testament it's the first command that Jesus gives a new believer.

4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his **commandments** is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but **whoever keeps his word**, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to **walk in the same way in which he walked**.

Deuteronomy 30:17-19

17 But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear,

The heart turning away and not hearing are the same thing. It has been said that your soul has ears. This is what Jesus meant by, "For him who has ears to hear." Do you refuse to listen? That's your heart turning away from

the good and true. Why would anyone turn away from what is good and true? The rest of this verse tells us.

but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them,

Most objections to God are simply excuses that allow you to keep your idols. You desire other gods. (Gives some examples.)

18 I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.

In their case, the blessing of their obedience was a promise for physical land. In our case, it's not. We make a grave biblical error when we connect God's promise of blessing in obedience it to any physical or material gain. That is the error of the prosperity gospel.

But the point is the same: "The decline and demise of churches is inevitable where loyalty to Christ fails to include commitment to the upholding of his words." (Iain H. Murray)

19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and curse. Therefore **choose life**, that you and your offspring may **live**,

Acts 16:30-31

30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

They nearly sound the same, don't they? That's because God is completely consistent.

These people were saved the same way we are saved — by grace alone through faith alone.

The choice they had before them is the same choice that is before you — to believe God. To believe God is receive spiritual life. And to believe God is to believe in His Son. What then results from believing God?

Deuteronomy 30:20

20 loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

1 John 5:1-5

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For

this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Your deepened trust in God will lead to greater obedience.

The only way to get a deepened trust in God is through relationship — reading His thoughts through His revealed word and praying to Him to understand His thoughts that we might apply His will to our lives.

Obedience is tied to relationship. Relationship is tied to trust, therefore obedience is a matter of trusting God.

The greater the trust, the greater the obedience.

While reviewing 40 years of his ministry, Robert Murray M'Cheyne wrote, “In infinite mercy the Lord has used me for winning souls, but I see today with awful fulness that if I had lived nearer God, if I had prayed more in the Holy Ghost, instead of winning five I might have got fifty or five hundred year by year.”

Thomas Edison, “If we all did the things we are capable of doing we would literally astound ourselves.”