

The Necessity of Obedience

Many today erroneously believe that the "covenant of grace" either de-emphasizes or relinquishes the Christian's obligation to fulfill the moral law. Few truly search the Scriptures and form their theological ideas from holy writ, but rather, glean "here and there" from the latest spiritual best-seller or the most popular TV evangelist/teacher. In the pulpit the situation isn't much better. Tragically, sound Biblical doctrine (that exposes sin and exalts Jesus) is unpopular. On the contrary, positive, up-beat, motivational, feel-good speaking is in unprecedented demand. Sadly, multitudes of professing Christians today violently reject any standard of morality as teachings of "law." With such thinking so prevalent and vehemently defended as orthodox, we are forced to ask ourselves these questions: Are we, as Christians, to obey the commandments of God? And if so, is to teach obedience a doctrine of legalism?

An honest examination of the current spiritual trends in today's church reveal that in an attempt to avoid legalism we have now succumb to Antinomianism. We have so recoiled from a "salvation by works" that we have produced a salvation without obedience. We would be wise to consider the warning of Christ regarding the spiritual atmosphere of the last days...

Matthew 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

The Greek word here translated "iniquity" means "lawlessness." *Jesus* is clearly pointing out that the last day spiritual error will be one marked by a hatred for restraint, rather than a bent toward legalism. However, the church has sired a generation who fear legalism more than they hate sin. They ramble on and on about avoiding "the bondage of law" while they participate in unspeakable vice and compromise. They piously talk of "defending the faith" yet live cold, dry, uninspired lives void of passion for *Jesus*. When talking to such people it appears that nearly every basic Biblical term has been redefined.

What is spiritual bondage? Apparently, obedience to the commandments of God is their worst nightmare. What is Biblical liberty? Evidently, according to such thinking, Jesus died to allow them to 'do as they please'.

Not surprisingly, the *false* and *blasphemous* doctrine of "*once saved always saved*" is the most popular doctrinal error of our times. Confusion abounds regarding the covenants of *law* and *grace* and to be zealous for the church to submit to Christ as Lord is equated with undermining Biblical grace. This spiritual malady in doctrine is referred to as Antinomianism.

- *Antinomianism*: (*Webster's 1828*) One of a sect who maintain, that, under the gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation; or who hold doctrines which supersede the necessity of good works and a virtuous life.

Interestingly, in many Christian circles the mentioning of the law of God is treated with greater disdain than gossip, cursing, and false doctrine. Is this Biblically sound? Ironically, *Jesus*, nor any of the Apostles ever spoke of the law of God in a derogatory manner. Many would be shocked to simply come to the revelation of this one Biblical fact: the Holy Ghost will never inspire anyone to speak negatively about the law of God. True, the law cannot save, nor can it make anyone holy, however, it has its place even under the gospel dispensation (1 Tim. 1:8-10). Nevertheless, Christians today forget that it is the ceremonial law, not the moral law, that is "done away with in Christ." Under the covenant of grace, the moral law is expressed and established in the love commandments of Christ (Matthew 22:40) and nowhere in the New Testament are we freed from our obligation to fulfill this moral law. The Bible teaches that "Christ's righteousness" was imputed to us, not His obedience - this we must offer ourselves through the power of the Holy Ghost (John 15:4-5). At justification, we are rendered "righteous" by virtue of the finished work of Christ as we are forgiven for all "sins past" (Romans 3:25). However, as Christians, we are obligated to fulfill the law of God by daily "walking in the Spirit" (Romans 8:4, Gal. 5:14-16). Furthermore, we are given "grace" that we might "walk in newness of life" and "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God which is our REASONABLE SERVICE" (When confronted with their obligation to "holiness" and "obedience" many

professing Christians believe it is an unreasonable demand) (Romans 6:4, 12:1). Let the reader understand, the Bible clearly teaches that Christians MUST OBEY!

Listen to the words of *John Wesley*, founder of the Methodist church, as he decries the errors of Antinomianism in his day...

Question: What is Antinomianism?

Answer: Antinomianism is the doctrine which makes void the law through faith.

Question: What are the main false pillars thereof?

Answer: (1) That Christ abolished the moral law. (2) That Christians are no longer obliged to observe it. (3) That one branch of Christian liberty is, liberty from obeying the commandments of God. (4) That it is bondage to do a thing because it is commanded, or forbear it because it is forbidden. (5) That a believer is not obligated to use the ordinance of God, or to do good works. 6. That a preacher ought not to exhort to good works; not unbelievers, because it is hurtful; not believers, because it is needless.

Sound familiar? It should, this perfectly describes the popular theology of the evangelical church-world of America today. In fact, these tenets are the rallying cries, the precious creeds, and the prized dogmas of the professing church for the past three decades. And we wonder why sin reigns from the White House to the county seat and from the pulpit to the pew? Friend, we are nothing more than a reflection of the theology we've embraced.

Perhaps you may conclude that this article was written by a "legalist" who is promoting "salvation by works." Others will believe these are the rantings of some far- out, on the fringe, cultic leader. However, before you calmly and confidently label such ideas as "*of the devil*" and "*doctrines of bondage*" would you please carefully consider the Bible? What did *Jesus* teach? *Jesus* commanded the Apostles to go and make disciples and teach all new converts to OBEY everything that He commanded them.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jesus declared only those who obey God's Word are truly blessed.

Lk 11:28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

We show our love for Jesus and God by obedience.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me..

In the Bible, love and obedience are inseparable.

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

2 John 1:6 ..this is love, that we walk after his commandments.

Disobedience, according to the Bible, irrefutably proves a lack of love for Jesus.

John 14:23-24 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine..

Those who actually inherit the kingdom of God love (or obey) God.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

To remain in Jesus' love, we must meet the condition of obeying His commands.

John 15:10 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.

Jesus' servants obey today just like they did back in Jesus' days on Earth.

John 15:20 ...if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

The Apostles knew and taught that obedience to God and His commandments were mandatory.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

The Holy Ghost is only given to people who obey God.

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

We are either slaves to sin, or slaves to obedience, depending on whom we obey.

Romans 6:16-18 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? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

The gospel is to be obeyed for salvation's sake.

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

Those who possess eternal salvation are those who obey God.

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him...

1 John 3:24 And that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him...

In the Bible, the unsaved are described as those who don't obey the gospel and who cannot stop sinning.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

2 Peter 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin...

Obedience to God's commands is a proof of salvation. Those who claim salvation, but don't obey are liars.

1 John 2:3-4 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Christians are described, in part, as those who obey God's commandments.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

From all these Scriptures, we have a clear picture that true Christians can and do obey God's commandments and are not living immorally as multitudes of false teachers, such as those that teach unconditional eternal security or OSAS (*once saved, always saved*). Disobedience can bring forth spiritual death to a person who was once saved (Lk. 15:24; Rom. 6:16; 8:13; James 1:14-15; 5:19-20, etc...). Ponder the following Scriptures and do not let yourself be deceived:

1 Cor. 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers

of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 *For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.*

Ephes. 5:5-7 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Rev. 21:8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

And remember, *Jesus* described his true spiritual family (his disciples) as those who put into practice God's Word and do His will.

Matthew 12:49-50 *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

Friend, there can be no doubt, saving faith is obedient to God and His Word (Rom 8:4). Those that live in sin reveal they have no genuine faith (Rom 8:7; 2 Pet 2:14). Reject all who teach otherwise, even if they are popular.

—B. W.

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