

"TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE"

1 Samuel 15:1-23

Obedience is one of the most important character qualities in life. A person's eternal destiny is determined by obedience— "What shall the end be of them that OBEY not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

It requires no special talent to obey. It only requires character. A young boy was applying for a job at a local newspaper office. The manager asked the boy, "Can you type?" The boy replied, "No sir." Then the manager asked, "Can you run a printing press?" The lad again answered, "No sir." Finally the manager asked, "Well, young man, what can you do?" The boy stood tall, smiled and said, "I can do what I'm told, sir!" And he was hired.

Yes, we can all do what we are told.

A couple who were engaged were discussing the fragility of many marriages. The young man asked his girlfriend the following question, "What if you wake up one morning and don't love me anymore?" She immediately responded, "There's always obedience."

- Obedience is following instructions.
- Obedience is submitting to authority.
- Obedience is the humbling of pride.
- Obedience is the response of love.

Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me... If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:21, 23). Obedience is always the response of love. To love God is to obey God. When I disobey God I am saying "I don't love God enough and I love myself too much."

Anything less than obedience is sin. Sin is disobedience. When we sin, it is because we choose to disobey. Disobedience is doing one's own will as opposed to doing God's will.

It is our responsibility to obey. Too often we say we are "defeated" by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated... we are simply disobedient. Instead of using the terms "victory" and "defeat" we should use the terms "obedience" and "disobedience." When I say I am defeated by some sin, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me. I am responsible for my thoughts, attitudes and actions.

Here in our text we have an example of a man who refused to take responsibility for his disobedience. Let's examine this account and learn some lessons about this important characteristic of obedience.

I. The Plainness of the command (v. 3). God's commands are always clear and precise.

- A. Command to be baptized after you are saved.
- B. Command to separation.
- C. Command to stewardship
- D. Command to witness
- E. Command to attend church
- F. Command to pray
- G. Command to Bible study.

II. The Promptness of compliance (v. 3 "NOW...").

In July, 1976, Israeli commandos made a daring raid at an airport in Uganda, in which 103 Jewish hostages were freed. In less than 15 minutes, the soldiers had killed all seven of the kidnapers and set the captives free.

As successful as the rescue was, however, three of the hostages were needlessly killed during the raid. As the commandos entered the terminal, they shouted in Hebrew, "Get down! Crawl!" The Jewish hostages understood and quickly obeyed falling to the floor, while the guerrillas, who did not understand Hebrew, were left standing. Quickly the res-cuers shot the standing kidnapers.

But two of the hostages hesitated and were also shot down. One young man was lying down and actually stood up when the commandos entered the airport. He, too, was shot with the bullets intended for the enemy. Had these three obeyed the soldiers' command, they would have been freed with the rest of the captives.

Salvation is open to all, but we must heed Christ's command to believe the Gos-pel. Otherwise, we will perish in the judgment meant for the enemy.

III. The Performance must be complete (v. 3 cf. vs. 9-15). Selective, partial obedience is disobedience.

A. Naaman had to completely obey the word of Elisha to be healed of his leprosy.

B. It is not the measure of the command, but the majesty of the Commander, that is to be the standard of obedience.

Earl Weaver was a great manager of the Baltimore Orioles. He had a simple rule that no one could steal a base unless given the steal sign. This rule upset Reggie Jackson because he felt he knew the pitchers and catchers well enough to judge who he could steal on.

One game Reggie decided to steal without being given the sign. He suc-ceeded in stealing the base but in doing so gave the advantage to the other team. First, the next batter was Lee May, Weaver's best power hitter other than Reggie. When Reggie stole second base that left first base open. The opposing team then pitched around May by intentionally walking him. The next batter after May wasn't very effective against that pitcher, so Weaver felt he had to send up a pinch hitter to try to drive in the men on base. That left Weaver without bench strength later in the game when he needed it.

The problem was, Jackson saw only his relationship to the pitcher and catcher. Weaver was watching the whole game.

We, too, see only so far, but God sees the bigger picture. When He sends us a signal, it is wise to obey, no matter what we may think we know. TRUST and OBEY! God knew in advance the problem the Amalekites would be.

IV. The Punishment of compromise (vs. 19-23). The cost of obedience is nothing compared with the cost of disobedience.

A. Obeying God is always for our benefit (Dt. 30:15-16). Disobedience will ultimately terminate in our hurt (Jer. 44:23).

B. People often alibi for their disobedience, "It's not a big deal. It's just a little thing."

Saul was eventually killed by one whom he was commanded to destroy (2 Samuel 1:8-15).

C. Later in the book of Esther, Haman, who was an Agagite, plotted the destruction of the Jews.

Conclusion:

- Disobedience is not a trivial thing (v. 23). God classifies disobedience as rebellion, witchcraft, stubbornness, iniquity and idolatry!
- Disobedience is rebellion because it usurps the authority of God in my life.
- Disobedience is as witchcraft because it opens my heart to Satanic dominion.
- Disobedience is stubbornness because it refuses to yield to the will of God.
- Disobedience is iniquity because it fails to recognize laws for my conduct.
- Disobedience is idolatry because I worship myself above the worship of God!

Roger Staubach was the quarterback of the 1971 World Champion Dallas Cowboys. However, he admitted up to that point it was a trial for him not to call his own plays. Coach Tom Landry sent in every play from the sidelines. He told Roger when to pass, when to run, and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!).

Even though Roger considered coach Landry to be a genius of football strategy, his pride said that he should be able to run his team. Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

When we learn to obey our Coach, the Lord Jesus Christ, there will also be harmony, fulfillment, and VICTORY!

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