

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

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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When Obedience is Complete

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Introduction

In our modern church groups the issue of obedience is being played down. Everything is now grace, even as some say, “super grace”. God loves us so much that He has not only forgiven every trespass but has also “winked” at our disobedience and covered it with His grace. Is this really what the Bible says? Are we using grace as an excuse for our unwillingness to obey? Is our individual obedience actually that important in the larger scheme of things?

The Scriptures always present Truth in balance; that is, seemingly opposite things are both presented as correct. The reality is that there must be a tension, a balance between the two opposing truths. An example that I heard many years ago makes sense. This example says that our understanding of truth is like a pendulum that swings back and forth in an arc. As the Holy Spirit emphasized a particular aspect of truth, the pendulum swings in that direction. Eventually, the extreme is reached and the pendulum begins to swing back; however, instead of stopping at the balance point, it will swing toward the opposing truth to compensate.

This is true of grace and obedience. Both are true. However, much of what we are hearing in some of the televangelists sermons has taken grace to an extreme. The pendulum needs to swing back into balance. That is done by emphasizing obedience.

In this lesson we are not saying that grace is unimportant, or ineffective. We are saved by grace through. What we are saying in this lesson is that we have lost the proper perspective on God's requirement for obedience.

Importance of Obedience

With the lack of emphasis on obedience in our current Christian teaching the importance of obedience has diminished in our understanding. However, it has not diminished to the Lord. I am not talking about obedience to some form of law; but, instead, of obedience to the Spirit of the Lord. Here are a few scriptures that show the importance of obedience. Read these carefully and let the Holy Spirit open them to you.

John 3:36 NASB

"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."

Romans 1:5 NASB

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Romans 2:5-11 NASB

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (6) who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: (7) to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; (8) but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (9) *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, (10) but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (11) For there is no partiality with God.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 NASB

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 5:9 NASB

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

1 Peter 1:22 NASB

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

1 Peter 4:17 NASB

For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

As we can see from these verses God does not take our obedience lightly. We should remember that lawlessness and disobedience are linked together. Jesus said that not everyone who calls Him Lord will enter His Kingdom because He will tell those who practice lawlessness to depart. [Matthew 7: 21-23]

Why Obedience is Important

Since we have grace to cover our sins, why is obedience so important? To some it is not important because they feel that they have received their fire insurance and are, therefore, forever safe from judgment. But the real answer to this issue is hidden in the mysteries of God, and is revealed to us by the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 10:5-6 NASB

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, (6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

From what Paul is telling the Corinthians, we can determine that there is some aspect of disobedience that can't be punished until our obedience is complete. What does that mean? Of course, in context here, Paul is speaking about the false teachers and apostles that were corrupting them and that they needed to become obedient to the word that he had ministered to them. However, I believe that there is also a larger context to what is being said.

God is not partial. When He punishes disobedience, all disobedience must be punished including the disobedience of the believer. It is not God's desire to punish His people in mass, so He is withholding some aspect of punishment for disobedience until His people can complete their obedience. Notice that it relates to “*taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*”.

The Obedience of Christ

We know that Jesus was obedient to the Father in all ways and in all things because He only did what He saw the Father doing and He only said what He saw the Father saying. We say, “of course He was obedient, He was the Son of God”. However, we forget that He lived His earthly life as the Son of Man—a man filled with the Holy Spirit. The reason that He did that was so that He would be the Last Adam, the Second Man. (*I Corinthians 15:45-47*) He had emptied Himself of the attributes of God when He took on the form of a man.

Philippians 2:5-8 NASB

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus did not bring obedience with Him from Heaven; instead He became obedient. Obedience was something He learned.

Hebrews 5:8 NASB

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

Because He learned obedience as the Son of Man, He can require obedience of those who would follow Him.

Hebrews 5:9 NASB

And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

John 14:15 NASB

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

[NOTE: *The measure of our obedience is the measure of our love for the Lord.*]

Why did Jesus have to learn obedience? It was necessary because of Adam's disobedience.

Romans 5:19 NASB

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

So, Christ Jesus overturned Adam's disobedience opening the way for judgment upon those who do not obey Christ but continue in disobedience. **Only the obedient can judge the disobedient.**

NOTE: I am not talking about someone who “never slips up” but one who is walking in a spirit of obedience, one with a desire to obey the Lord. Just as there is a spirit of lawlessness there is also a spirit of obedience.

Judging Disobedience

Now that we have covered the background information and laid a foundation of the importance of obedience, let's look at what it means to “punish all disobedience when your obedience is complete” as mentioned by Paul to the Corinthians. *Besides the Corinthians*, whose punishment for disobedience is being held back until our obedience is complete ?

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 NASB

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts? (3) Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

We have in these verses two categories of the disobedient that the saints will judge: the world and the angels. These cannot be judged until our (*corporate*) obedience is complete because only the obedient can judge the disobedient.

One of the purposes of Jesus coming as Messiah was to destroy the works of the devil [*1 John 3:8*]. This includes a righteous judgment on his disobedience. Through the obedience of Jesus, His death on the cross, and His sending of the Holy Spirit, “the ruler of this world has been judged” [*John 16:11*]. Judgment has been pronounced on the Devil; the sentence will be carried out and he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire [*Revelation 20:10*]. But, what of the company of angels that rebelled against God with the Devil? Is it these that we, the corporate Body of Christ, will judge, for God is now ready to punish their disobedience **when our obedience is complete.**

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