

The Blessing of Obedience
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We're in a series called Forward in Faith. In this series we are using the word FORWARD as our outline. Follow – Obey – Resist – Worship – Abide – Reach - Disciple

We've spent a few weeks talking about what it means to follow Christ. We are now moving to the O in Forward and teaching on obedience.

Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 which says:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Following Christ includes making disciples of all nations. And making disciples includes teaching them to obey all His commands. I'm preaching today about The Blessing of Obedience.

Most people don't see obedience as a blessing – they see it as a burden. That's because Satan has done a really good job of deceiving many people about obedience. He gets them to believe 1 of 2 extremes – either, I must obey in order to be good enough to be saved. That is legalism – believing we can earn salvation by keeping the rules.

Or the other extreme is called license – the misbelief that because of grace we don't have to obey God – we actually have a license to sin. Both of these beliefs are wrong. The truth is that obedience is all about love. Think about this: why does God give us commands to obey? To keep us from having any fun? To exert control like a dictator over our lives? NO! Here's the first thing I want you to see:

1- God gives us commands because He loves us!

He wants us to obey because He wants what is best for us and He wants to bless us. Before going any further – let me define obedience and blessing.

OBEDIENCE means to carry out the will of God. The New Testament Greek word for obedience comes from 2 words - Hupo meaning “under,” and akouo meaning “to hear.” To hear under – to hear as someone submitted to another. This applies particularly to servants who were attentive to the requests made of them and who complied. And to soldiers who heard the orders of a superior officer and obeyed. This word contains the ideas of hearing and obeying.

It's not enough to hear or know God's Word, we must do it. And God always blesses obedience. Joshua 1:8 says:

Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

James said the same thing in the New Testament in James 1:22-25

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

Obedience to God releases blessing from God. Likewise, disobedience hinders blessings.

We all want to be blessed. We all pray for blessing. But, what does it mean to be blessed? The New Testament Greek word for blessed is Makarios. Strong's Concordance defines it as to be fortunate, happy and well off. This is the word used in Luke 11:27-28

As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Jesus Himself said that blessing from God comes to those who obey God. We obey God because we know He loves us and He wants only what is best for us.

1 John 5:3 says:

This is what love for God is: to keep His commands. And His commands are not a burden.

God does not burden us down with a list of unreachable, unattainable Laws. His commands are not a burden because they are things that a good God who loves us knows are best for us.

If you are a parent, think about why you want your children to obey you. Do you want your children to obey you out of fear of punishment, out of desire for reward, or out of love? What if they said they loved you, but never obeyed you? We express our love for God through obedience. Why is obedience so important? Again, think like a parent. Why is obedience important for our children? Are we just tyrants who want to control little people? No, we want what is best for our children. We want them to obey for their own good, for their maturity, for their

protection. If they don't instantly obey at home, they won't instantly obey when you yell "stop" as they're about to run into a busy street.

Obedience is what is best for the child. Likewise, God wants what is best for us. He wants us to grow up, be blessed and be protected. There is blessing that comes through obedience.

Why is obedience so important? Because that is where God's blessing is.

Man's laws are not given to hinder us; they are given to protect us. You disobey them to your own peril. If you decide to make up your own traffic laws and stop on green and go on red – you won't be driving for very long. It's the same with God's laws. We break them at our own peril.

God's laws are given to protect and bless us. God gives us commands because He loves us!

2- We obey God's commands because we love Him.

We don't obey God out of some morbid fear of punishment. We don't obey God out of a works-oriented attempt to gain His favor. We obey Him out of love. We obey because He knows what's best for us. And when we obey, it not only protects us, it also results in blessing.

But we obey God because we love Him and it's the right thing to do. We don't obey just for the blessings – but when we do obey God, God blesses us!

Jesus gave us the great commandment in Matthew 22:37-40.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Jesus reduced the commandments of the Bible down to 2 things we need to know and do – love God and love people. And most people you meet will say that they love God and they love people. But I believe loving God involves much more than people think. Loving God is more than believing in God. Loving God is more than having warm feelings toward God. Loving God results in obeying God. In fact, Jesus said that if you don't obey Him, you don't really love Him. Listen to these quotes from Jesus – who said in John 14:15

If you love Me, keep My commandments.

In John 14:21 Jesus said:

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.

In John 14:23-24 Jesus said:

If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching.

1 John 2:3-5 says:

We can be sure that we know Him if we obey His commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love Him.

Do you see a pattern here? Love for God results in obedience – from the heart. Jesus modeled this for us. He said in John 14:31

The world must know that I love the Father; that is why I do everything as He commands Me.

Everything! It's amazing how people want to pick and choose what they believe in the Bible and pick and choose what they believe about God. People want to believe in God cafeteria style – where they can choose what they want to believe in the Bible and ignore the rest. They emphasize the love of God and have forgotten that there are things God hates! They emphasize the grace of God and ignore the holiness of God! They want the forgiveness of God, but not the justice of God. They believe in Heaven – but choose not to believe in Hell.

Many people seem to believe in a God they make in their own image so they can do whatever they want, and God must do whatever they want. Excuse me? If we believe Jesus is our Lord and Savior – we must believe and obey what He taught.

Jesus said it this way in Luke 6:46

Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' when you do not do what I say?

In other words, those who truly believe in the Lord, obey the Lord. In fact, the only part of the Bible you really believe is the part you obey.

Unfortunately, many of us treat obeying God like obeying our doctor! What do I mean by that? Every year, people spend billions of dollars going to doctors. But statistics show that more than half of all patients fail to follow their doctor's instructions. Isn't that ironic? We go to doctors, pay them money, and then go out and ignore what they told us.

What occurs in the doctor's office also occurs in the Church. God's prescription for well-being is outlined in scripture, but many choose to ignore the Great Physician's orders. And we wonder why we have problems and our lives don't work properly.

Too many people act like God gave us the 10 Suggestions rather than the 10 Commandments. But God gave us commands to obey because God wants to bless us and He knows that disobedience robs us of His blessing.

Remember what James 1:22 says:

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Obedience leads to blessing. Disobedience leads to deception. How do people deceive themselves? By giving themselves a pass when it comes to obeying God. For instance, the Bible teaches that any sexual relationship outside of a marriage between 1 man and 1 woman is wrong. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 says:

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.

I know many people get upset with this and accuse us of being old-fashioned, bigoted, mean and hateful when we preach this. But we didn't make this up! They are not rejecting us – they are rejecting God!

Regardless of what anyone else says, God says any sex outside of marriage between a man and a wife is wrong and it has consequences. God does not say this in order to deny us pleasure – He wants to bless us and He knows that any sex outside of marriage will not be blessed. God created sex and He knows that sexual sins cause huge problems for people.

I've counseled people who were sexually promiscuous years ago, but it still impacts them physically, emotionally, spiritually and relationally.

I know it's popular for people who live together outside of marriage to say, "You wouldn't buy a car without a test drive, so why get married without a test drive." As I was studying this week, I saw this article: Too risky to wed in your 20s? Not if you avoid cohabiting first. Cohabiting is living together without being married. Worldly wisdom says that early marriage increases the risk of divorce. So, if you wait until your thirties, your more likely to have the wisdom to be a good spouse.

However, recent research of more than 50,000 women by the US National Survey of Family Growth found that those people in their 20s who married without cohabiting prior to marriage have one of the lowest divorce rates. The reason given is that cohabitation piles up relationship baggage that can sabotage marriage later on.

The article says that most young adults believe that living together is the best way to test your partner, thus increasing the stability of your marriage. But a growing body of research shows that those who live together before marriage have a much lower chance of a happy married life.

A study by Penn State University discovered that those who cohabitate:
 Have more troubled relationships and a higher rate of divorce if they do marry.
 Have less happiness and more depression than those who marry.
 Have more conflict than those who marry.

This research proves what God said all along: that sex outside marriage has serious consequences. God tells us to flee immorality because of the consequences we reap. Some of those are physical. More than 68 million people in the U.S. have a STD – a sexually transmitted disease. That's 1 in 5 people!

And experts are trying to find a way to stop the spread of STDs. Find a way? God gave us the way! Hebrews 13:4 says:

Marriage must be honored among all and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge adulterers and everyone who commits sexual sins.

If everyone obeyed this command, there would be no STD's because sex would be limited to husbands and wives. You see, when you disobey God, you end up hurting yourself. You've deceived yourself and there's no one to blame but yourself! Obey God and you will know the blessing of obedience.

We must not try to excuse ourselves from obeying the Word. For instance, some people say: I know I should tithe, but God knows I can't afford it. But if you ask tithers, they always say they can't afford NOT to tithe. That's because they know the blessing of obedience.

Stop deceiving yourself into thinking God's commands don't apply to you! Renew your mind with the Word of God! Stay in faith because true faith results in obedience. Romans 1:5 says:

Through Jesus and for His name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

Notice that obedience comes from faith. In other words, faith results in obedience. Not the other way around – we don't get faith by obeying.

We get obedience by believing. True faith results in obedience. 1 Peter 1:2 says:

You were chosen according to the purpose of God the Father and were made a holy people by His Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be purified by His blood.

God chose you to be made holy. And holiness comes from being purified by the blood of Christ and by obeying the commands of Christ. Too many people want the purity without the obedience! But it doesn't work that way!

So, you're going to have to decide whom you will obey: the Lord or the world. The world tells you to live for yourself – but God says to live for Him. And when you obey Him by living for Him – He blesses you!
Obedience results in blessing!

The world tells you to do what feels good – but God says do what is right. And when you obey Him by doing what's right – you feel good!
Obedience results in blessing!

The world tells you to spend all you make on yourself – but God says you need to give to Him first. And when you obey Him by giving to Him – He gives to you even more!
Obedience results in blessing!

The world says that human wisdom is greater than God's wisdom. But when you obey God – He gives you wisdom from on high!
Wisdom that is pure and peaceable - full of mercy and good fruit!
Obedience results in blessing!

The world tells you that God just wants you to be happy. But the Bible says that God wants you to be holy.

And when you obey, He makes you holy and happy!
Obedience results in blessing!
Obedience results in protection and provision!
Obedience results in joy and peace!

The world tells you that all roads lead to God. But Jesus said that He is the only way to the Father.

And when you obey the Gospel by placing your faith in Jesus Christ – you receive the blessings of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life!