

Blessings through Obedience

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the importance of living by the Word of God. As believers in the God of truth, we ought to have a reverential fear for God. Yet, even though we have a deep desire to obey, there are times when we do not live according to every word of God.

Living by every word of God (Matthew 4:4) means being sanctified by the Word (John 17:17). First, we have to hear the Word preached. Secondly, we have to choose to obey what we hear by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For example, a husband who is not single-eyed toward his wife and looks at other women is not living by God's Word. He is violating the divine institution of the family. A wife who does not submit to her husband in the Lord is not living by every word of God. She is to submit to God first and then to her husband's spiritual leadership under Christ and His Word. A Christian who does not love people as God loves him

is not living by every word of God (Matthew 19:19). Christians who do not consistently go soul winning are not living by every word of God.

The Holy Spirit must teach us the theme of this booklet. We must not enter into private interpretation and act upon it according to our own understanding. If we will allow these thoughts to be established in our soul, we will experience the joy of living in obedience to every word of God through the Holy Spirit's power.

Chapter One

LETTING GOD LOVE YOU

“But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).

Man must live by every word of God; however, a Christian who is not tender-hearted toward others, forgiving as he has been forgiven, is not living by every Word of God. A Christian who reacts to a matter before he hears the whole story is not living by every Word of God. As a result, he returns evil for good (see Proverbs 17:13, 18:13). A Christian who does not comfort the feeble-minded (speaking of those whose souls are small, who lack capacity to receive from God fully) is not living by every word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:14). A believer who releases negative vibrations by saying words that are not edifying is not living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

So, What Is the Problem?

Loving God is not a problem for most Christians. The great problem in the Church is letting God love us. The most important thing we can do is to let God love us. Having that kind of love means that we can live in the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not in the desires of the flesh.

No one can solve a problem or straighten out a situation if he doesn't have what it takes inside of him. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). You cannot manufacture spirituality for someone else. You can only reveal Christ. You cannot talk anyone else into being spiritual. You can only express the truth of the Word of God in life.

The evidence that the Cross is working in our lives is seen in how, through Calvary's love, it restrains us from sin, from emotional disorders, from mental disturbances, from moodiness, from loquacious reactions, and from inward fear that robs our capacity to know God.

Love is not a spiritual option. It is a spiritual provision. We fully experience it through the blessings of our obedience to God's voice (Deuteronomy 4:14-15; Joshua 24:24). Israel obeyed the voice of the Lord (Jeremiah 42:6;

Deuteronomy 11:27). The people were deeply blessed because they obeyed God.

Obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience produced by faith (Romans 1:5) carries the Gospel into all the world (Romans 16:25-26). The Bible says that those who obey the Lord eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

Hear God's Voice

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14)

As we come to the place where we have the substance of God's Word inside of us, we become overtaken by God's inner glory, amazed by God's presence, astonished by God's life, and overwhelmed by His resurrection power. That is when we can move mountains by faith, having the nature of love that never fails.

As we come to understand this principle, we will realize that many do not obey the Gospel.

There are many who never obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and many who do not obey the Great Commandment to love (Matthew 22:37-39). It is all because they do not hear God's voice.

Speaking about the truth without obedience is professing Christianity while living in hypocrisy. Knowledge without the life of the Spirit is religion without Christianity. Emotionalism without victory is spiritual fraud against faith. Living in the past means that you have no Cross in your life and that you don't believe in taking up the Cross daily. Talking about the past is worthless, causing damage to the soul (Matthew 12:34-36). We are to have spiritual communication that gives life, edifying the hearer (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6).

A person who habitually lives in sadness has refused the Holy Spirit's joy. A person who has no peace has refused Christ's Cross. Jesus Christ made peace for us through the Cross—a peace that the world cannot give (Colossians 1:20; John 14:27). A person who is always relating to problems in the flesh reveals that he does not know that his provision is in Christ.

To live in fear means you do not have love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18). To live in bitter-

ness reveals self-conceit and self-occupation that refuses to come to Christ and yoke up with Him by faith (Matthew 11:28-30).

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Without love, it is impossible to serve God. A faith that serves by love pleases God, serves God, reproduces His life, and reveals Him to the world. This is the kind of obedience that brings blessings to the weakest believer who simply trusts and obeys.

Chapter Two

VESSELS OF TRUTH

A Christian who hears the truth and does not obey it is a Christian who is like a vessel with a broken bottom. He cannot retain the water of the Word (Jeremiah 2:13), and he is a vessel of dishonor.

A person who condemns himself when he hears the truth will never be set free from condemnation because he rejects the truth. Truth always declares, "If you obey Me, there is no condemnation." Truth, however, also says, "If you disobey Me, you will go from sin to sin and have a covering that is not from God. At best, you will be a sentimental human being who needs soul-power relationships, trying to fulfill a void apart from having a relationship with God.

"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” (Romans 6:16-17).

This is extremely interesting to me. The Bible says that when we obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to us, we are free from sin. Repeatedly I come face to face with dear people who will not obey the doctrine God delivers through their pastor-teacher. They will not receive the messages from the pulpit as the Word of God, even though they love and respect the pastor. The result is that they do not have a victorious Christian life.

The Condition for Right Fellowship

A Christian becomes very lonely when he doesn't walk in the light, because walking in the light is the only basis for real fellowship. Some will blame other Christians in the church for not recognizing and ministering to their needs. But the truth is that those who blame others for their misery are not walking in the light that brings fellowship.

Young people as well as adults should be taught to go soul winning on purpose. They should be instructed in how to reach the lost and

to disciple new believers.* People who make excuses for not making a practice of soul winning have wrong priorities. Everyone has responsibilities; still, a Christian who does not seek the lost is not obeying from the heart what the Word of God teaches (Matthew 28:19-20). If he doesn't have a plan to be consistent in winning souls, he is disobedient.

A pastor must speak the truth in love. Then he will be an acceptable pastor before God when he introduces his people to Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat, where believers' works are evaluated.**

This is so important to understand, because when a godly pastor gives an account to God concerning the members of his congregation, he will be able to say, "I preached the Great Commission, Lord, and I led the people by example." But those who didn't go soul winning will have to explain to God why, according to Romans 14:12.

Our obedience is such a vital issue. We must never take lightly the precious Word of God and the words that come from the pulpit. A great price has been paid to preserve the Scriptures.*** Every word is for our benefit, so we can receive blessings now and for all of eternity.

**For more about the importance of soul winning and discipling, read Leading People into Discipleship, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

***This subject is thoroughly discussed in The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

****Be sure to read The Price of the Gospel, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Three

GOD'S GUARANTEE OF BLESSING

"As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me" the Psalmist wrote of God's people (Psalm 18:44). They didn't get discouraged; they didn't get depressed; they were obedient.

The only Christian who can properly represent God is the one who obeys Him. No one has a reason to live in past problems unless he is disobedient to faith in God's finished work that took care of the past. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). And the reason people cannot get over problems of the past is that they live in doubt, outside of faith. They do not know the *living* God. They only know God through knowledge and not through a relationship with His life through the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, the demons know God this way, too (James 2:19). Even the Pharisees believed that there was one God. So did Demas,

who forsook Paul to live in the world (see 2 Timothy 4:10), and Diotrephes who stirred up rebellion against John (see 3 John 9).

Obedience is a guarantee to being blessed spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. God expects us to be obedient to His Word. For instance, a corporate executive or a woman with children is still responsible to the truth of the Great Commission. There is nothing in the Bible that says that either one is exempt from the Great Commission.

Follow the Example of Godly Men

The apostle Paul said to the people in his church in Corinth, “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (1 Corinthians 4:15-16). Following a pastor’s faith means you follow what he does himself in accordance with what he preaches (Hebrews 13:7). In other words, you follow what he preaches and follow his practical obedience.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

“That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11).

An inward love that surpasses knowledge is excellent and produces fruits of righteousness. The standards for this love are the Holy Spirit, the Cross, and the knowledge of the Word of God that comes to life through resurrection power in the intimacy of a personal faith.

No church has been spiritually blessed without spiritual obedience. If the pastor does not preach the importance of discipleship and living through the Cross, it would not be a spiritual church.

People who forsake churches that bear the fruit of obedience forfeit the rewards they were to receive from blessing by association with that church (Matthew 10:41; 2 John 8). They will suffer loss as the production of their carnal lives—wood, hay, and stubble—will be burned.

Faith that Works by Love

It is so crucial to read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and understand the courageous things

that the heroes of faith did because of love. A faith that can move mountains profits nothing if it does not have love (1 Corinthians 13). “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

I consistently ask in tears for the members of my church to pray that I will always be obedient to every word of God. And, likewise, I ask them to be obedient to all that the Bible teaches.

A wife does not determine her husband’s spirituality, and she never will. Likewise, a man can never determine his wife’s spirituality. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ the living Word determine our spirituality. Some people withdraw when their spouses are off. They are spiritual cowards who don’t know how to have and stand in a vertical relationship with God that is established in truth.

We don’t have to pay the price for someone else’s sin. We are blessed and rewarded when we maintain a right relationship in the face of temptation and adversity.

Obedience to the Call to Rebound

Love reveals my relationship to Calvary and the resurrection. Faith reveals my relationship to

the Word of God. The fruit of the Holy Spirit reveals my relationship with Him. My ability to rebound when I fail determines my capacity for integrity.

Rebound is a magnificent provision of God, so that even if I fail and go through a process of weakness, I can still live in victory, according to 1 John 1:9, Psalm 32:5, and Psalm 51:1-13.

It is vital that we practice rebound every time we fall into sin. That is how we are cleansed and then filled with the Holy Spirit. That is how we can know the will of God. As the light of the Word shines in our hearts, we will no more desire to live in sin because we were obedient to God's call to rebound.

Obedience: It is right. It maintains peace. It brings a blessing. It is God's way to prosper His children as we learn to grow in steps of faith.

CONCLUSION

These thoughts are from God and were given for this hour to help us live by every single word of God. Pray for one another. We are sinners saved by grace, and we all have areas of strength and weakness. But we are all equal in the area of obedience, because obedience is a choice.

May God impress upon each of us the urgency and reality of this message regarding the power of obedience to the truth. We are to pray for one another that we might be healed (see James 5:16). If we do not pray for others, then we are sinning, revealing that we don't understand the value of prayer (1 Samuel 12:23).

Let's be established in our relationship to the Cross, ready to receive the revelation of the Word of God as it comes to us personally from the throne of God, correlated in categorical doctrine, as we build up storehouses of truth in our souls. Be renewed in the provision of His presence, as Christ manifests Himself through us.

Then, we will gladly obey the Word, knowing that we will only receive blessings because of it.