

Last week we looked at the the foundational heart attitude of *Faith*. We learned that *faith is trusting God based upon His revelation of Himself*. Because our faith rests on the promises of God, it is not accurate to say that is a “blind faith”. Faith is standing firmly on the promises of God as found in His word. It is then trusting Him to fulfill those promises, based upon what we know about His character (Heb 11:6).

What we will see this week is that faith does not stand alone as an attitude of the heart but it is inseparably linked to another heart attitude – obedience.

📖 James 2:17-24. **Q.** v17. What *is faith* if it stands alone?

Q. v18. Because faith is an inward attitude of the heart, it cannot be seen. How *can* our faith be made visible?

Q. v21-23. Verse 23 indicates that Abraham believed God. How was this belief made visible, according to verse 21?

📖 Gen 22:8. **Q.** What did Abraham believe God would do?

When Abraham offered his son Isaac he did it in obedience to the *command* of God and by trusting in the *character* of God (Gen 22:2-3). He believed that God would provide a substitute for Isaac or that He would raise him from the dead (Gen 22:5, Heb 11:19)! Each of the men and women mentioned in Hebrews 11 have their faith described by an act of obedience toward God.

👋 **Discuss.** *What should we think of someone who claims to believe in God but has no evidence of obedience to God in their life?*

Salvation – An Act of Obedience

📖 Heb 5:9. **Q.** For whom is Jesus the author of eternal salvation?

📖 Rom 6:17-18. **Q.** How did these folks become free from sin?

📖 Acts 5:32. **Q.** To whom has God given the Holy Spirit?

📖 Acts 6:7. **Q.** How does this verse describe the actions of the chief priests?

📖 2 Thess 1:8. **Q.** On whom will God take vengeance?

The above verses make it clear that *obeying the gospel* is a synonym for salvation. It is perfectly legitimate and scriptural to see salvation as an act of obedience on the part of the unbeliever. This obedience could not happen without the intervening work of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, it is an act of obedience.

👋 **Discuss.** *Why do you think Salvation can be referred to both as “belief” and “obedience”?*

Saved By Obedience

Every man or woman who has ever been genuinely saved from their sin has done so by *obeying the gospel*. In order to understand why scripture refers to salvation in this way we must understand two very important, yet neglected, aspects of salvation – repentance and the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Repentance involves turning *from* sin and turning *to* God (1 Thess 1:9, Acts 26:17-18). It is the obedient response to the gospel’s claim that sin is a violation of God’s holy character and must be turned from.

📖 Acts 17:30. **Q.** What *command* does God have for all men everywhere?

📖 Luke 10:13. **Q.** Why did Jesus pronounce *woe* or condemnation over Chorazin and Bethsaida?

📖 Acts 2:38. **Q.** After Peter’s powerful salvation message at Pentecost, the gathered Jews asked him what they should do. What was Peter’s response?

Repentance is required for salvation (Acts 20:21, Mark 1:15). Jesus said that

without repentance we would all perish (Luke 13:3). Since, according to these verses, repentance is a command it is also a matter of *obedience*.

Turning from sin to God is, in actuality, turning from a life of rebellion against God to a life of submission *to* Him:

📖 Rom 6:16-22. **Q.** v17. What *were* we? _____

Q. v17. What did we do? _____

Q. v18. What did we become? _____

The Bible says that we were once the *servants of sin* but have become *servants of righteousness*. Salvation then involves a change in *who we obey* (Matt 6:24).

For the sake of the redemptive plan, God has put all things under the feet of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36, Eph 1:22, 1 Cor 15:27, Heb 2:8). He has ordained that all who would be saved would do so by submitting themselves to the authority of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:9-10, Php 2:5-11).

Repentance and submission to the authority of Jesus Christ is a matter of obedience. Some might accuse us of “works-salvation” for preaching repentance and the lordship of Jesus Christ. The fact is, this obedience is the very essence of saving faith. It is not enough to believe the *facts* of the gospel. The devils believe there is one God (James 2:19), they even believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God (Matt 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41). They certainly understand that Jesus rose from the dead and that he is Lord of all (Col 1:16, 17). Believing the facts of the gospel does not reconcile us to God, but responding to those facts with obedience does.

At the moment of salvation, the believer does not understand all that repentance and obedience to Christ entails. All they know is that He is the only way to be saved, and He is the one whom God has exalted as Lord over all. As the Christian grows, he learns more and more about what it means to serve God and to obey His son. The point is, salvation from its very starting point is a matter of obedience.

👉 **Discuss.** *If the above is true, how should it affect the way we present the gospel?*

Saved To Obedience

The man or woman who understands that salvation is a matter of obedience to God will *continue* in obedience. Jesus Christ himself said that this continued obedience is a mark of genuine salvation.

📖 John 8:31. **Q.** Who are Christ’s genuine disciples?

📖 1 John 2:3-5. **Q.** How do we know if we know Christ? In whom is the *love of God perfected*?

The true Christian understands that the Christian life is a life of obedience. From the moment we hear the gospel message and God’s command to repent, we understand that He requires obedience. In fact, the very essence of repentance is turning *from* disobedience *to* obedience.

📖 Eph 2:10. **Q.** What has God created us *unto*? What has God ordained?

📖 1 Peter 1:1-2. **Q.** We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. What are we chosen (elected) “unto”?

God’s plan of redemption includes calling out a people from sin and disobedience to submission and obedience. These are they whom God would create to perform “good works”. The continued, day-by-day work that God does in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is to make us obedient to His commands. Philippians 2:13 says *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*.

So integral to the salvation plan is obedience that Jesus Christ included it in the Great Commission:

📖 Matt 28:19-20. **Q.** According to verse 20, what were the disciples to teach others?

Christ told us that we are not only to preach the gospel but to continue to teach Christian’s what He had commanded, encouraging them to obedience.

Obedience, an Act of Love

Sometimes we think of obedience as forced or obligatory but a Christian’s obedience toward God is not this way:

📖 John 14:15. **Q.** If we love Christ, what will we do?

📖 John 14:21. **Q.** Who loves Christ?

The word of God is plain, if we love Jesus Christ, we will obey Him. Jesus' direct statement that a love for Him results in obedience is clear evidence that salvation at its very core is obedient submission to the authority of Jesus Christ. This obedience is not driven by guilt, fear, or obligation. It is driven by heartfelt love for God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. Christian obedience is a loving submission to the one who loved us and died for us. It is a legitimate *attitude of the heart*.

Trust and Obey, For There is No Other Way, To Be Happy in Jesus

📖 James 1:22-25. **Q.** v25. What will the man *be* who not only hears the word of God, but obeys it?

The word *blessed* here means “happy” or “fulfilled”. True happiness in the Christian life comes from obedience. The most miserable person in the world is a disobedient Christian. He can no longer find joy in sin, nor does he experience the blessing of an obedient Christian life. Consider some of the following *blessings of obedience*.

Answers to Prayer: 📖 1 John 3:22. **Q.** When can we be confident that we will receive answers to our prayers?

Spiritual Discernment: 📖 John 7:17. **Q.** Who will be able to discern right from wrong doctrine?

The Presence of God: 📖 John 14:23. **Q.** Who will experience the presence of God?

Stability in Life: 📖 Luke 6:46-49. **Q.** v48. What is the man who obeys Christ's words like?

Many of the promises and blessings that accompany salvation are conditional. That is, they only apply to the *obedient* Christian life. The Christian who fails to obey God's word, to submit to the leading of the Spirit or who continues in sin, is forfeiting the blessings of obedience. He suffers from instability in life, spiritual ignorance, broken fellowship with God and unanswered prayer. True, spiritual happiness comes only when the Christian lives a consistent life of obedience.

Obedience is not legalism. It is not doing our best to follow God's rules. It is a love-driven *attitude of the heart*. It is a loving submission to the one who died for us and the outward evidence of our faith.

Review

1. Why do you think James says that faith without works is dead?
2. Why is it accurate to say that salvation is an act of obedience?
3. How do repentance and the lordship of Jesus Christ require obedience?
4. Continued obedience is a mark of genuine salvation but that doesn't mean that a genuine Christian is not sometimes disobedient. How can someone tell the difference between a lack of salvation, and backslidenness?
5. Sometimes we think of obedience as something that we are obliged or forced to do. How is Christian obedience different?
6. Why will a disobedient Christian be unhappy?