

Dig Deeper / Obedience as a Response to God
Exodus 20:1-17 / Ephesians 2:1-10 / 1 Peter 1:13-21
Otisville Church of Christ / January 13-19, 2013

Teaching

Many people view obedience in the wrong light. They see it as something they “have to” do to keep God's favor, or to keep God happy with them, as though they were earning these things. Obedience is viewed as one's *duty* that they must do to ensure God's continued blessings and salvation for them.

This comes from a wrong view of the gospel. God saves us through the gospel. Paul writes in Ephesians that salvation “is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (2:1-10) so that no one may claim that they earned salvation for themselves or are more righteous than another. Instead, he clarifies the role of obedience and good works when he writes that we are God's “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” This means that our obedience emerges from our new creation in Christ.

We obey because we have first been saved. Our obedience, rather than being a duty to be performed, should be viewed as a gracious response to God for his grace shown to us. If we view ourselves as a “work” of God that he is continually shaping, we will view our obedience to him in a different light. That is, God is shaping us for him and our obedience allows us to conform more to the image he is creating us to be.

Peter connects these same things. In the early part of 1 Peter, he commands two things: Be holy in all your conduct; and conduct yourselves with fear during the time of your exile. He connects these two commands with the character and action of God so that our obedience to these commands is not seen as something we “have to do” but as a response to God. God always acts first and calls us to respond to him in obedience.

Therefore, we are to be holy *because God is holy*. We are to be like him. We are to conduct ourselves with fear *because God the Father judges each one impartially according to their deeds and because we have been ransomed by the blood of Christ*. Peter connects each command either to the character of God or to the gospel. Obedience is not something that stands alone; it is deeply connected to our connection to God. When we understand the gospel, we see these connections.

It has always been this way. Peter's basis for commanding holiness is found in the Mosaic Law, in the book of Leviticus. The law, as revealed first to Moses in Exodus 20 through the “Ten Commandments,” begins with a declaration by God of his own character and action on behalf of his people *before* he calls for their obedience to him

through the legal requirements. Although these commands, that form the basis of the entire law, describe how one ought to relate both to God (the first four) and to others (the last six), they begin with this statement: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Character, rescue and redemption. These come first; the call to obedience comes second.

Absorb these scriptures and these ideas and let your thinking about obedience be reframed away from obedience as cold duty to warm delight as you obey God from a sincere and glad heart for who he is and what he has done in Christ.

Questions

1. Had you seen this connection between obedience and grace before?
2. How do you tend to view obedience—as duty or as delight?
3. Do you spend enough time reflecting on the gospel? Does the gospel determine how you read the Bible and view God's commands?
4. What do you need to do to obey God that you have been putting off? Why have you been putting it off?
5. What other passages or sections of scripture can you think of that teach these same things?