

## 5. Obedience—a Requirement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Obedience was a command, clear and certain, to Jesus and the apostles. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many do not see obedience as necessary. Some religions ignore the specific teachings of the scriptures, such as, the belief and baptism requirement to be saved in Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21. Further, some religions completely re-write the moral prohibitions of the Gospel, becoming ever more immoral in their teachings: homosexuality as an acceptable life style, permissive sex among the unmarried, and divorce for any cause are commonly held. The situation ethics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century replaces the ethics taught by Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, “*Do not lie to each other*” of Col 3:8 becomes *do not lie if it hurts some one else*. This inquiry begins with establishing what Jesus and the apostles taught about the necessity for complete obedience to the scriptures.

### ***What Did Jesus and the Apostles Teach about Absolute Obedience?***

**Do we really have to obey everything?** In Matt 7:21, the Lord taught, “21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” When Jesus gave his great commission, he established the necessity of absolute obedience in Matt 28:20, “20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” From the very beginning of the Christian age, Jesus taught the scope and the parameters of obedience. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and in the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries alike, Christians are to obey *everything* commanded by the Lord and taught by the Apostles. This absolute requirement continues *always* and to the very end of the age. Jude taught this same principle in Jude 3, “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” The *faith* that Jude speaks of is, by definition, the revealed system of faith; and parallel, therefore, to Jesus’ statement: *all things that I have commanded you*. This faith is once for all delivered.

The gospel and its power come from our obeying this faith. Jesus taught in John 14:15-17, “If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – 17 the Spirit of truth.” Anyone who loves the Lord obeys him. The love of Jesus equates to keeping his commandment. Not loving Jesus equates to not keeping his commandments. Jesus continued in John 14:23-24, “Jesus replied, “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. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. This was true in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and it is true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is not enough to give mere credence to the commands of Jesus; we must hear and do. Paul wrote in Rom 2:13, “13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.” The demand to obey comes directly from the proclamation of Jesus and the gospel preached by the apostles and prophetic writings. This revelation is by the command of the eternal God and remains in force forever. Paul summarize in Rom 16:25-27

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him – 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

**What are the consequences of not obeying?** Having called mankind to obedience, God

placed serious consequences on those who do not obey. These consequences were for those of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Peter forecast these consequences by asking about the fate of those who do not obey the gospel in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Paul answered the question asked by Peter in 2 Thess 1:8-9: "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."

### ***What Are the Excuses Used in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Order to Deny Obedience to the Lord?***

**Tradition keeps people from obeying the entire gospel.** *My folks' religion*, usually a denominational creed, does not practice that. The church I grew up in did not require that. My parents did not do those things. The answer is the same in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century: we must set aside all traditions and obey the teaching of Christ. Jesus said in Matt 15:7-9:

7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:  
8 "These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
9 They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men."

We have already seen that obeying the teaching of Jesus is required of all men, "And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt 28:20. "Rules taught by men" cannot save.

**Some think that what we do or how we do it makes no difference.** This is equivalent to the popular saying, "You go to your church, and I will go to mine, and we will all go to heaven." These 21<sup>st</sup> century sayings are just the opposite of what Jesus said in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In Matt 7:21-23, partially cited above, the Lord said:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

**The Bible does not say not to do it.** The world could not contain the books if the Lord had specifically forbidden everything we are not to do. What He has done is to provide the scriptures that tell us exactly what to do by thoroughly equipping us for every good work. Paul summarizes in 2 Tim 3:14-17:

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly

equipped for every good work.

Even small changes in these scriptures bring the most severe of consequences. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

**It does not hurt anybody.** This idea is the foundation of situational ethics. The point missed by these folks is that our spiritual relationship is between our heavenly Father and us. One wants to lie and says that this will not hurt anyone, and after all, who will know. It hurts that very same person because God knows. We must all be righteous before God for it is unto him that we obey and serve. Paul concluded in Rom 6:17-18, “But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” Our duty before God is to obey him and establish our righteousness. The situation has no effect on this obligation to God.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, God required absolute obedience, with serious penalties for those who do not. This principle is as true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. `Who among would dispute the word of the Almighty God.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Mark 16:16: What did Jesus require to be saved?
2. 1 Peter 3:21: What does now save us? What does the water of baptism cleanse?
3. Col 3:8: May we tell a white lie as long as it does not hurt anyone?
4. Matt 7:21: Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?
5. Matt 28:20: What must we always obey?
6. Jude 3: What was once for all delivered?
7. John 14:15-17: What will we do if we love Jesus?
8. John 14:23-24: If we love and obey Jesus, what will we receive?
9. Rom 2:13: Who are the righteous?
10. Rom 16:25-27: What are all nations to do?
11. 1 Peter 4:17-18: Who are scarcely saved? What will become of the unrighteous and the sinners?
12. 2 Thess 1:8-9: What will happen to those who do not obey the gospel?
13. Matt 15:7-9: Whose rules do men follow when they worship in vain?
14. Matt 7:21-23: What will God say to those who do not do his will?
15. 2 Tim 3:14-17: Where do we learn exactly what we must know?
16. Gal 1:6-9: What happens to those who pervert the gospel of Christ?
17. Rom 6:17-18: From what are we set free, when we obey the teaching of Christ?