

Lesson 21: OBEY AND ABIDE

If Ye Keep My Commandments, Ye Shall Abide In My Love - John 15:10

I. Introduction

- a. In a previous lesson reference was made to the believer's entrance into a life of **rest** and strength. This we said is the product of a true insight into the personal love of Christ toward us.
- b. We also noted that among the assurances Christ's love provides is the guarantee of the keeping of the soul. The believer, who is possessed of such a faith, sees and accepts it, through **surrender** or *consecration*.
- c. The soul sees that it cannot claim the keeping of this wonderful love unless it yields itself to a life of entire **obedience**. We must be surrendered or consecrated to Christ in order to obey Him from the heart.
- d. We have also seen that the kind of faith that can trust Christ for keeping the soul from sinning must prove its sincerity by venturing at once to **trust** Him for the very strength to obey.
- e. In that type of faith we **purpose** to give up and cut off everything that hinders our soul, and we promise and will to live a life that is well pleasing to God.
- f. This is the thought we have here now in our Savior's teaching. Namely, the close connection between the possibility of holy living and the concomitant **obligation** to perform.
- g. The living of the Christian life is both a possibility and an obligation. It is a possibility because the Holy Spirit dwelling within **enables** one to obey and provides the grace to do so. *Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. KJV*
- h. The Christian life and obedience to the will of God is also an obligation because it is the only **true way** that one can express one's genuine relationship to Christ.
- i. Comprehension of the significance of this profound **obedience** and how it demonstrates one's true faith is a worthwhile study.

II. The Significance of Obedience

- a. In its simpler Old Testament meaning the word obedience signifies "to hear," "to listen." It carries with it, however, a deeper ethical significance of hearing with reverence and obedient **assent**.
- b. In the New Testament the word denotes "hearing under" or of **subordinating** one's self to the person or thing heard, hence, "to obey."
- c. In some usages the word applies to **human** relationships, as between master and servant, and particularly between parents and children. *Deut 21:18-19 "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, that, will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and, though they chasten him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place"*
- d. In other places the word is used in connection with a **sovereign** and subjects. *2 Sam 22:45 "The foreigners shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me"*
- e. The highest significance of its usage, however, is that of the relation of man to God. Obedience is the supreme **test** of faith in God and reverence for Him. *Ex 20:5-6 for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. KJV*
- f. From God's point of view, obedience is the one important aspect of man's relationship with Him which must not be broken. This we can clearly see from **Genesis** onward in the Scripture. *Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. KJV*
- g. While sometimes obedience may have been formal and cold, it nevertheless can be seen as the one strong tie which **restrained** evil and to some extent held the people close to God. *Ps 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. KJV*
- h. However, there is a clear condition revealed to us throughout Scripture that establishes that all "true obedience" is that which not only conforms outwardly to the commandment of God but also derives its **motive force** from the heart. *Matt 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. KJV*

III. Obedience as a Matter of Heart

- a. In the New Testament obedience takes on a higher spiritual and moral relation than in the Old Testament, and we see how motive and one's inner state are **conditions** of true obedience. *John 14:31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. KJV*
- b. **Christ** is Himself the one great illustration of obedience. *Phil 2:8 He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross".*
- c. In Christ's example of obedience we see that His motive was His **love** for the Father. He was not driven to the cross by fear or dread that somehow the Father would reject or punish Him if He did not do His Father's will.

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- d. Obedience to God which is generated out of the motive of **fear** of rejection or punishment is the product of the carnal mind and of a legalistic religious system of belief. *2 Tim 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. KJV*
- e. Christ teaches us that one's obedience must emanate from a **motive** of love rather than from a motive of fear. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. KJV*
- f. Thus an act of obedience is a supreme test of faith in Christ. **By obedience** to Him we are through Him made partakers of His salvation. *Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; KJV*
- g. Indeed, obedience is so **vitally** related to genuine salvation that they are in some cases almost synonymous. Paul expresses this idea of "Obedience that comes from faith". *Rom 1:5 Through him 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. NIV*
- h. Therefore, the bond of union we have with Christ is obedience through faith. By this means we become **identified** with Him and in so doing demonstrate our status as His disciple. *Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? KJV*

IV. Obedience and Abiding

- a. After having spoken of a life in His love as a **necessity**, ("Abide in my love"), Jesus states what its one condition is: "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*"
- b. At this point some might despair because they realize that just as we **cannot** keep His commandments, we therefore, cannot abide in His love.
- c. Such a conclusion **misses** the point that in this case the precept is a promise: "Abide in my love," could not be a precept if it were not a promise. This is no unattainable ideal
- d. Our love for Christ motivates us to approach this open door of obedience and abiding. However, as we enter His blessed abode, He extends His hand to **enable** us to keep His commandments.
- e. It is **our will** but it is His doing that releases the power in us to obey. *Ps 119:173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. KJV*
- f. Therefore, let us not fear to take the vow of obedience, and purpose within ourselves to the keeping of His commandments because the power to obey lies in the strength of our **Lord**; a power that He bestows upon us.
- g. It is His power within us that causes us to **love and to do**. This opens the way to our abiding in His love.

V. The Common Struggle

- a. This obedience requires that we perform all that we **know** to be God's will. There may be things doubtful, of which we are not sure. However, a sin of ignorance has still the nature of sin in it.
- b. There may be sins of **omission**, which rise up in the flesh, which we fail to control or overcome. With regard to these God will deal in due time in His unique way of searching and humbling.
- c. These are the **common** strivings of even the most sincere and obedient disciple of the Lord. Even here the promised deliverance is in His hands. *Rom 7:24-25 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. KJV*
- d. When we love the Lord and obedience is the **purpose** of our heart, the will is disposed to receive the grace which then appears in us. This allows us to accept Christ's strength to produce obedience in our behavior.
- e. Faith in Christ as our Vine, in His enabling and **sanctifying power**, prepares us for this obedience of faith, and secures a life of abiding in His love.

VI. Application

- a. *If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love*-It is the heavenly Vine unfolding the mystery of the life He gives. It is to those abiding in Him to whom He opens up the secret of the full abiding in His love.
- b. It is only through knowing His will that one can know His heart, and only through doing that *will* one can abide in His love. Are you abiding in His Love? Is obedience the dominant purpose of your heart?
- c. To what extent are you wholeheartedly surrendered in everything to do His will?