

What Does It Mean To Obey The Gospel?

Introduction. Someone came to me one time and said, "You are always talking about obeying the gospel. What does that mean?" When I hear a question like that, my first reaction is to feel guilty. I know, in preaching and teaching over the years, we can easily slip into the habit of using certain words and phrases with the assumption that people know exactly what we mean.

It is a mistake to make that assumption. From time to time we need to stop, define our terms and explain what we mean; and we need to do all that with reliance on the scriptures. It is true that I am always talking about the need for people to obey the gospel; many of you use the same expression. In fact, the New Testament uses the term "obey the gospel" three times (Romans 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Peter 4:17). During this lesson, we will take the time to give a simple explanation of what obedience to the gospel means, based on what the scriptures teach.

I. **What Is Obedience?**

- A. It is fundamental to understand that we cannot be saved from sin and belong to God's spiritual family without obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9).
- B. What is obedience?
 1. Obedience is the expected response to divine instruction. It means "to comply with the command, direction or request of a person or a law; submit to the authority of. to heed or conform to a command or authority."
 2. When I become aware of instruction from God that applies to me, God expects me to respond by following His instructions, His truth.
 - a) Everything that we need to do; everything that we need to know and everything that we need to be is set forth in God's word for us (2 Peter 1:3). The New Testament is a perfect pattern for God's people, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b) Either we need God's pattern all the way, or we do not need it any of the way. There may be ways that seem right before men (Proverbs 14:12).
 - (1) Even so, how something looks to men is not the way truth is determined (Proverbs 12:15). You determine the truth by what God says (John 17:17).
 - (2) Truth is its own validation. It will always be truth whether anybody believes it or not, or if anybody follows it or not (Psalm 100:5; 117:2).
- C. Consider three illustrations of obedience:
 1. Adam and Eve.
 - a) God gave instruction about their sources of food, and they un-

- derstood this instruction (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3).
- b) The expected response was for Adam and his wife to respect God, and thus refrain from the forbidden tree.
2. Noah.
- a) God told Noah about His displeasure with the world, and of His intention to cause the great flood.
 - b) The only way for Noah to survive was to follow God's instructions, which he did fully (Genesis 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16).
3. Abraham.
- a) God gave Abraham instructions about leaving his home and going to another place. Abraham heard, believed and obeyed (Hebrews 11:8).
 - b) Faith always discovers its existence in obedience. All one has to do is look at the rest of Hebrews 11.
- D. God may want us to do something we would rather not do. Or, there may be something we would like to do, but God tells us, "No!" If I really know who God is; if I am convinced and fully persuaded of His goodness, His power and authority, I will do whatever He says even if it is difficult, if others think me strange or if I must suffer.

II. ***What Is The Gospel?***

- A. The definition of "gospel" is "good tidings" or "good news." This is in contrast to the bad news of sin or failing to live by God's standard (Ephesians 2:2-3).
- B. The good news is that God has made arrangements for us to be better. Even before the world began, God was making plans to help us, to save us and give us the power to live right and go to heaven.
 - 1. This will lead us to the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:25-27). This is the desired and expected response to the good news.
 - 2. The book of Romans spells out for us the "obedience of faith."
 - a) Hearing (Romans 10:14).
 - b) Believe (Romans 1:16-17).
 - c) Repent (Romans 6:5-7).
 - d) Confess (Romans 10:9-10).
 - e) Be baptized (Romans 6:3-4).
- C. This is about what God's power can do for man which man cannot do by himself. God made plans for us before the world began, and that mystery was "kept secret," but was finally "made manifest" and "made known to all nations."
- D. As the apostles carried this good news to the world, they preached Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18).

1. They would have preached that deity became flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
2. They would have preached that He lived entirely and perfectly without any sin (Hebrews 4:14-16).
3. They would have preached that He bore the punishment we deserve; giving His spotless life, suffering in His death, the penalty for our sins (1 Peter 2:21-25).

Conclusion. The question is not, "Do you attend church services?" The question is not, "Were you baptized as an act of admission into a church?" The question is not, "Did you do what your parents wanted you to do?" The real question is, "Have you obeyed the gospel (Psalm 40:1-5)?"

Remember that genuine faith always discovers its existence in obedience. In the name of all that is good and holy and right before God, in view of your need for salvation and guidance from heaven, we plead with you to allow the Lord to have the supreme place in your heart and life; unreserved allegiance based on trust in Him and love for God.