

Obedience to God's Word

The following article is an excerpt from
"A Study of the Teachings of Jesus Christ"

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In the Gospel of John, we read:

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus answered and said to him, ***"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."*** (John 14:21-24. Emphasis added.)

This passage is yet another example of Jesus' teachings where He makes distinctions between those who are His and those who are not. Jesus taught in this passage that men will demonstrate a genuine faith in Him by the fact that they walk in obedience to His commands. Believers do sin at times (1 John 1:8 - 1 John 2:2), but the life of every believer will be fundamentally characterized by obedience to the word of God. By contrast, the lives of unbelievers will be characterized by disobedience to His word.

In John 15, Jesus said: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:10). Although every believer is called upon to obey the word of God, and

our obedience is evidence of our genuine faith in Christ, we should understand that we do not “abide” or remain in God’s love through any works or efforts of our own. We do not obtain our salvation, nor do we maintain our salvation, by our own efforts put forth to walk in obedience to the word of God. If that were the case, then we would be able to boast that our own works were good enough to get us saved and keep us saved.

The Scriptures teach us that our salvation is not a result of any works of our own, so no one can boast that their own actions and efforts had anything to do with their salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 9:16). Rather, our salvation is the gift of God given to us as His elect, as those whom He chose before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:4-5).

As genuine believers, we should understand that we abide in God’s love, in union with Christ, because by God’s grace we have been called to faith in Christ (John 6:44, 6:65, 10:1-3, 10:14-16, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 1:1-2, others). We should also understand that it is by God’s power, and not by our own power, that we abide or remain in Christ (John 6:37-39, John 10:27-30, Matthew 18:10-14, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 1 Peter 1:3-5, others).

Even though our salvation in no way depends upon our own efforts, either before or after we are saved, every believer should know that there are consequences for disobedience to the word of God, which is sin, and there are consequences for both believers and unbelievers. Jesus teaches us about these consequences in a parable that He gave in Luke 12:35-48, where He exhorted everyone present to watch, to be ready for service, and to keep their lamps burning.

As we begin our study of this parable, we should understand that all men are “servants” of God and will serve His purposes in some capacity, even those who do not acknowledge Him. (Consider Isaiah 45:1-6, Romans 9:17-18, others). We should also keep in mind that some will profess to be God’s servants in that they profess to have faith in Christ, and they acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but their profession is in fact false. (Consider Matthew 7:15-23, 13:24-30, 36-43, 18:21-35, 25:1-13, 25:31-46). With these things in mind, we will consider the two categories of servants that Jesus mentioned in Luke 12:35-48.

In this parable, we see that Jesus admonished everyone present at that time to watch and be ready for service, like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast. ***Believers will be the servants who obey Jesus’ command***

to be ready for service (Luke 12:40). They will be the ones whom the master finds waiting and watching for His return, as we read in Luke 12:35-40.

Other servants do not obey Jesus' command. They engage in worldly, sinful indulgences, even beating their fellow servants, demonstrating a blatant lack of any love or concern for them. (Consider John 13:35, 1 John 4:8). Jesus spoke of these servants in Luke 12:45-46, saying that the master would ultimately cut them to pieces and assign them a place with the unbelievers.

We as believers, by the sovereign choice and grace of God are assured salvation, and we will escape the fate of those who are “cut to pieces” and assigned “a place with the unbelievers”. However, we should be very careful to heed Jesus’ warning in Luke 12:47-48.

In these verses Jesus taught that the servant who knows his master’s will but does not prepare himself or does not do what his master requires, will be beaten with many stripes. (Consider Hebrews 12:4-13). Jesus also taught that the servant who is not aware of his master’s will and does things deserving of punishment will be beaten with few stripes. Jesus concluded His teaching in this parable by saying that much will be required from the one who has been given much and entrusted with much.

The longer we walk with God, the more we will understand of His word and His will, and the more we know of God’s word and what He requires of us, the greater the responsibility we will have to be obedient to what He has revealed to us. Let us therefore be diligent not to be among those servants who know the Master’s will but do not prepare themselves or do not do what the Master wants, because there is a consequence for this, and as Jesus admonished us, we will be beaten with many stripes.

Such disobedience is not building upon the foundation of our faith in Christ with gold, silver, and precious stones, as Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Rather it is building with wood, hay, and straw, which will not stand the test of fire and will result in God’s chastening in our lives, as well as lost blessings and rewards.

