

Obedience, the Best Medicine

“I was not disobedient”
(Acts 26:19).

Evangelist D. L. Moody, writing on “obedience” said, “My subject is one you will not like very well, but I have found a long time ago that the medicine we don’t like is the best medicine for us.” (*The D. L. Moody Collection*, Edited and Compiled by James S. Bell, Jr.)

“And the LORD GOD commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. 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” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Man has always been required to believe and obey God. God warned Adam that he would die if he disobeyed by eating from the forbidden tree. This command gave Adam a choice. He could believe and obey, or not believe and disobey. As long as he believed and obeyed, he continued in fellowship with God and had eternal life.

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

Eating the forbidden fruit caused Adam and Eve to be driven from the Garden of Eden, breaking the fellowship they enjoyed with God, and brought them spiritual death.

God Said through Moses

God used Moses to write Deuteronomy, the “Book of Remembrance.” It was to be read to the children of Israel every seven years.

Deuteronomy encouraged God’s people to remember and obey the commandments of God. Faith and obedience allowed them to inherit God’s blessings and promises. Disobedience brought failure and judgment. As with other covenants, God’s covenant with Israel contained the promise of blessings for those who obey and curses for those who refused to do so. (See Deuteronomy 28: 3-19.)

📖 “Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey” (Deuteronomy 6:3).

📖 “And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 6:18).

 “A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day. And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:27-28).

 “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it” (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).

“What good would it do to get everything
you want and lose you, the real you?
What could you ever trade your soul for?”
(Mark 8:36 The Message)

Unfortunately, Moses failed to keep one of God’s commandments. He was told to speak to the rock in the wilderness. Instead, he struck it twice. Water poured out, and Moses instantly became a hero to God’s people. Although a success to man, he had failed God’s test.

Side Note on Prosperity

There is much emphasis on prosperity today. The blessing of prosperity is directly related to and the result of obedience. Some violate God’s Word, come under a curse (of poverty) for failure to pay tithes, yet wonder why they do not reap the blessings of prosperity.

“And when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey . . . I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you . . . He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers . . . Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul . . . See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess . . . this day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, 6, 9-10, 15-16, 19, NIV).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Obedience Continues

-  “But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents” (Joshua 22:5-6).
-  “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).
-  “And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” (Joshua 24:24).

Long ago, when leaders came to Rome, they were asked, “Will you be at peace with Rome or not?”

If a time to think it over was requested, the Romans would take a rod and draw a circle around the man. They would then say, “Decide before you step outside this circle. If you do not agree to peace before you cross the line, Rome will crush your country with her armies.”

Failure to be at peace with God brings death to the transgressor. We must choose today whom we will serve.

God has provided us the freedom of choice. Each person must continually choose whom he will serve. It is not just a one-time choice. Believers choose time-after-time to continue to obey God.

Results of Obedience

-  “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (John 8:51).
-  “He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” (Proverbs 4:4).
-  “If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures” (Job 36:11).
-  “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:3-4).

- 📖 “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments” (Deuteronomy 5:10).
- 📖 “But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there” (Nehemiah 1:9).
- 📖 “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Proverbs 3:1-2).
- 📖 “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:15-16).
- 📖 “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

Results of Disobedience

The consequence for disobeying God remains the same since the days of Adam—spiritual death, breaking fellowship with God, and missing His promises.

- 📖 “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).
- 📖 “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

Vance Havner in *Consider Jesus* said, “Our Lord bade us go not merely to teach them ‘all things whatsoever I have commanded you,’ but to teach them ‘to observe all things.’” He continued, “You have not really learned a commandment until you have obeyed it . . . The church suffers today from Christians who know volumes more than they practice.”

- 📖 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).
- 📖 “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Paul testified before Agrippa, “I was not disobedient.” We should strive to have the same testimony.

“Only he who believes is obedient;
Only he who is obedient believes.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Study Questions

1. What punishment did Adam and Eve receive for eating the forbidden fruit? _____

2. What does the book of Deuteronomy encourage us to do? _____

3. How often was the Book of Deuteronomy read to the Israelites? _____

4. What do covenants promise? _____

5. How did Moses disobey God? _____

6. What was the consequence of Moses's disobedience? _____

7. What are five results of obedience? (Check through the scriptural references given to find the answer.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

8. What are the consequences of disobeying God? _____

9. Vance Havner said a commandment is not learned until what happens? _____

10. According to Vance Havner, why does the church suffer? _____
