

What Does the Bible Say About Obedience?

Obeys is not a popular word. It sounds harsh to modern ears, as though it belonged to a sterner and less enlightened time. But it runs all through the Bible, and Jesus put it at the very center of what it means to love Him. Far from being grudging servitude, obedience to God is the natural response of a heart that trusts and loves Him. Let us see what the Scriptures say.

Obedience Is the Proof of Love

Jesus tied love and obedience together so tightly that they cannot be separated. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* ([John 14:15](#)). John echoed it, *"this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"* ([1 John 5:3](#)). We may say we love God all we like, but the proof is in whether we do what He says. A love that will not obey is only words, and words are cheap. The heart that truly loves God shows it by obeying Him.

To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice

When King Saul disobeyed God but offered sacrifices to make up for it, the prophet Samuel rebuked him with words we all need: *"Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice"* ([1 Samuel 15:22](#)). God is not impressed by religious activity offered in place of obedience. We cannot make up for disobeying Him in one area by being zealous in another. He asks first for obedience, not substitutes for it.

Be Doers, Not Hearers Only

It is possible to hear the word constantly and never do it, and to fool ourselves that hearing is enough. James warned, *"be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* ([James 1:22](#)). Jesus said the same in sharper form: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* ([Matthew 7:21](#)). Hearing without doing is self-deception. The word is given to be obeyed, not merely admired.

Christ Our Pattern

Our Lord Himself is the great example of obedience. He *"humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* ([Philippians 2:8](#)). The Hebrew writer says that *"though*

he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" ([Hebrews 5:8-9](#)). Notice the last words. Salvation belongs to those who obey Him. The sinless Son obeyed His Father perfectly, and He calls His people to follow Him in it.

Obedience and Salvation

This is why obedience is bound up with our salvation. Paul wrote that the Lord will take vengeance on *"them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* ([2 Thessalonians 1:8](#)), and Peter spoke of those who had *"purified your souls in obeying the truth"* ([1 Peter 1:22](#)). This is not earning salvation, for it is all of grace. It is receiving it on God's terms rather than our own. And it must come from the heart, for Paul thanked God that the Romans had *"obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* ([Romans 6:17](#)). God wants willing obedience, not cold compliance.

The Blessing of Obedience

Obedience is not a burden that robs us of joy. It is the path of blessing. When a woman praised His mother, Jesus answered, *"yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it"* ([Luke 11:28](#)). This obedience extends to the rightful authorities God has set over us, parents and government alike ([Ephesians 6:1](#); [Romans 13:1](#)), yet always within the bounds of His will, for when men command what God forbids, *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* ([Acts 5:29](#)). So obey God from the heart, gladly and fully. That, and not mere talk, is what love for Him looks like.

Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.