

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - July 21, 2022

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Ten Steps to Spiritual Renewal - Part II - Step 2

Title: "Getting Serious About Obedience"

Scripture Reference: Nehemiah 8:13-18

I. Introduction

A. In this lesson we will discover five dynamics related to obedience in the Christian life.

B. The Bible is like no other book in the world. Reading it is good, but obeying is better. In our previous lesson, it was pointed out that the centrality of the Word of God is step number one toward spiritual renewal and maturity. But just reading the Bible is not enough.

C. There are many people who know the Bible, some even very well, but they are not as spiritually mature as they should be. It is because they haven't taken the next step - obedience to God's Word.

D. We are to read the Bible with the goal of obeying and putting into practice what it says. It is that second step that begins to reveal maturity in the life of the believer.

E. We observed in the previous lesson how the people of Israel immediately obeyed what they heard as Ezra read from the Book of the Law.

F. Israel had ignored God's Commands concerning the Feast of Tabernacles - so they immediately set about to correct that disobedient behavior.

G. In this lesson, we will use the actions described in Nehemiah 8:13-18, as the basis for our study of Obedience To The Word of

God.

H. "Obedience" is perhaps the single most important word to sum up the heart of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. God is our Father and obeying Him is our duty as His children.

I. Through Israel's response to God's revelation, we can make five observations about the nature of obedience:

1. Obedience is Related to **Hunger**.
2. Obedience is Related to **Humility**.
3. Obedience is Related to **Honesty**.
4. Obedience is Related to **Habit**.
5. Obedience is Related to **Happiness**.

II. Discussion - Obedience Is Related To Hunger (Nehemiah 8:13)

A. It is quite plain to see that the "chief (heads) of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites" were hungry to understand the words of the law (v13).

B. They had already stood for several hours listening to Ezra read the Word the day before, and "on the second day" they returned to him for more! Wow!

Comments:

- 1) It has been said that - "To be hungry is not enough. You must be really starving to know what is in God's heart toward you."
- 2) When the prodigal son was hungry, he went to feed upon the husks: but when we was starving, he returned home to his father.

C. To "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) means to be desperate; to fear dying unless one is fed.

D. That is apparently how the people of Israel felt when they

heard Ezra read from the Book of the Law. They had not been fed the Word of God for decades and decades. There had been a famine of the Word of God in their land (Amos 8:11).

E. As a result, for eight days, as they fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles, they feasted on obedience to Word (Neh. 8:18).

III. Discussion - Obedience Is Related To Humility

A. Among the group that approached Ezra - fathers, grandfathers, priests, Levites (v13), some, if not many, were probably younger than Ezra.

B. Certainly, the priests and the Levites might have considered themselves superior in some way to Ezra. Yet, they **humbled** themselves and came to Ezra, "to understand the words of the law." They in essence said - "Feed us - we want to learn."

Comment: That statement "**Feed us - we want to learn,**" would make any pastor overjoyed if the people of God said that today.

Point: Humility is a prerequisite for spiritual growth.

C. The Bible often speaks to the subject of humility and its opposite, pride. The book of Proverbs warns - "Be not wise in thine own eyes:..." (Proverbs 3:7a). Isaiah 5:21 says - "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Romans 12:16c says - "be not wise in your own conceits."

D. Those verses are in the Bible to remind us that the person who is full of himself or herself, have no room for God, displaying a lack of humility. But a humble person is one who knows that they do not know everything.

E. Remember, the men and leaders who approached Ezra were (so to speak), graduates of a seventy-year-long School of Humility" held in Babylon. They were not eager to repeat that course, so they humbled themselves before Ezra and asked him to teach them God's Word.

IV. Discussion - Obedience Is Related To Honesty

A. The Third observation in this section on obedience and is the heart of the issue, and that is Honesty. Honesty is a large part of being obedient to God.

Comment: Right here, I need to provide a little background information in order for you to really appreciate what is happening regarding the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. As the men and leaders of Israel were listening to Ezra read the Book of the Law, when he got to the portion of Leviticus ((that is numbered today in our Bible's as Leviticus 23:33-43)), they were shocked to discover that they had not been keeping the Feast of Tabernacles.

C. In fact, we read in Nehemiah 8:17 - "... for since the days of Jeshua (i.e., Joshua), the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. ..." What this tells us is that the Feast of Tabernacles had not been kept for over a thousand years, since the days of Joshua. Not even during the glory days of David and Solomon was the Feast of Tabernacles observed.

D. But the people who listened to Ezra acted with the innocence of children. They did what the Word of God instructed them to do - they chose to obey God's Word.

E. Honesty is required when it comes to obeying God and this should never be an exception in the life of a Christian. Integrity and transparency will reveal no ulterior motives. The only motive should be to please God by obeying Him in whatever He says to do!

F. Think about Noah in the book of Genesis. God commanded him to build an ark to escape the great flood that was coming. This command was given at a time when it had never before rained on the earth.

G. Noah must have looked foolish to those to whom he tried to explain his building project. They didn't know what rain was because no one had ever experience it. Yet, Noah took God purely at His Word and did what God told him to do. //As the old country

preacher might say right here after finishing his sermon - "Lord, I done done what you told me to do."//

V. Discussion - Obedience Is Related To Habit

A. In Nehemiah 8:18, we learn that Ezra continued to read "day by day, from the first day unto the last day" of the Feast, and this was for eight days. The people couldn't get enough of the Word as they listened to Ezra read through ((what would be for us)) the first five books of the Bible.

Point: If you don't feel hungry for God's Word, you need to make a habit of consuming it. The more you eat, the more you will want to eat. Soon you will not be able to get enough of it.

VI. Discussion - Obedience Is Related To Happiness

A. Finally, let's observe that obedience is related to happiness: "and there was very great gladness (i.e., happiness)" (v17).

B. Happiness is a result, or a by product of knowing and applying the Word of God.

C. The people in Israel must have felt happy on that day to know that they were doing something that had been neglected for a thousand years, and that is the feeling that comes with obedience.

D. This happens in all areas of the Christian life. The joy that comes when you set your feelings aside and choose to obey the Lord is unlike any other.

Point: The greater the challenge to your will, the deeper the joy that comes from obeying God's will instead of your own!

E. There is no joy in the world like the joy that comes from obeying God. When we reflect everyday on the blessings of God as the Israelites did during the weeklong Feast of Tabernacles, we are given new motivation daily for obeying God.

VII. Summary

A. We have covered five observations concerning how obedience

relates to various aspects of the spiritual life in Christ:

1. Obedience is born out of **hunger** for God and His Word.
2. Obedience is a matter of **humility** as we seek from God what we could never attain on our own.
3. Obedience is a matter of **honesty** towards God's requirements.
4. Obedience feeds on obedience so that it becomes a Lifestyle (i.e., a **habit**), and
5. Obedience is the truest source of **happiness** in the Christian's life.

B. Can you identify each of these five observations and connections to your own life?

C. Step one toward spiritual renewal and maturity is to get into God's Word, and step two is to begin to obey it.

Additional Observations

- What kind of hunger did Jesus identify in Matthew 5:6?
 - What promise did He make to those who are hungry and thirsty?
 - Read Isaiah 53:1-3.
 - To whom is the passage addressed? (v1)
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It is once again interactive time. Please fill in the blank spaces of the Scriptural passages below. Each passage was taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"A _____ man will hear, and will _____; and a man of _____ shall attain unto _____ counsels:"

[Proverbs 1:5]

"Happy is the man that findeth _____, and the man that getteth _____"

[Proverbs 3:13]

"Get _____, get _____" forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. _____ her not, and she shall _____ thee: _____ her, and she shall _____ thee."

[Proverbs 4:5-6]

"For as by one man's _____, many were made _____, so by the _____ of one shall _____ be made _____."

[Romans 5:19]

"Though he were a _____, yet learned he _____ by the things which he _____; And being made perfect, he became the _____ of eternal _____ unto all them that _____ him;"

[Hebrews 5:8,9]

Thank you for being a part of another Bible Study session and I pray

that this material has been a blessing to you.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin