

IS OBEDIENCE NECESSARY?

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Usually when people get into a discussion of salvation and the part that both God and man play in that, the discussion comes around to whether or not man MUST obey the commands of God to be saved. Paul said in Ephesians 2:8,9 that salvation comes by grace through faith. Then in this passage and in Romans 6:23 he says it is a gift of God. So, if salvation is a gift of God's grace and it comes to us through faith, why is obedience necessary to our receiving salvation? This is the problem of many.

The simple answer is that obedience is faith working! A faith that does not work (obey God) is a dead faith (James 2:17-26). Faith in Jesus as the son of God (i.e., receiving him) gives one the right (power) to become a child of God (John 1:12). The faith is moved by love (Gal. 5:6) to obey whatever God says to do. With this explanation we have harmony with the passages that teach salvation is by grace (God's goodness) through our faith (believing in God and in Jesus as his son) when we obey the commands that he gives. We do not earn salvation, it is a gift. But it is given conditionally--conditions being that we will obey him!

This harmonizes with passages like Hebrews 5:9 where saints are told that Jesus gives eternal salvation to all those that obey him. If salvation were unconditional it would be given to everyone, good and evil. God's goodness (grace) covers all in this sense. But it is also dependent upon man's faith and that faith working (obeying). A long, long time ago God emphasized that he wanted obedience to his

commands and not just offerings (I Sam. 15:22). Saul made a decision to offer sacrifices rather than to obey commands. God rebuked him for it! Worship is a waste of time unless it is in the form of obedience.

When the Lord comes again he will take vengeance upon all those who have not obeyed the gospel (II Thess. 1:7-9). Here again we notice that obedience is essential to one pleasing God! I am not trying to show WHAT the commands are that must be obeyed, I am simply showing that obedience IS essential if one is to please God! This was emphasized by Paul again in Romans 2:6-11 when he says God will punish those WHO DO NOT obey the truth. Truth MUST be obeyed if we would please God. Not just some parts of the truth, but all truth (II Cor. 2:9). It is in obedience to truth that one purifies his own soul (II Pet. 1:22). This is not of merit or of one's own power, but by the grace of God. God's grace purifies when men obey from a heart of faith moved by love.

YES, obedience is necessary to salvation! God's grace provides it. Our faith is the basis upon which we can receive it but it comes to us WHEN we obey from the heart (Rom. 6:16-18). Let us search the scriptures to see WHAT it is that God wants us to do (obey). Then let us obey his commands without question, complaint or murmuring. Let our faith be alive and well and God will bless us for it -- now and eternally!
