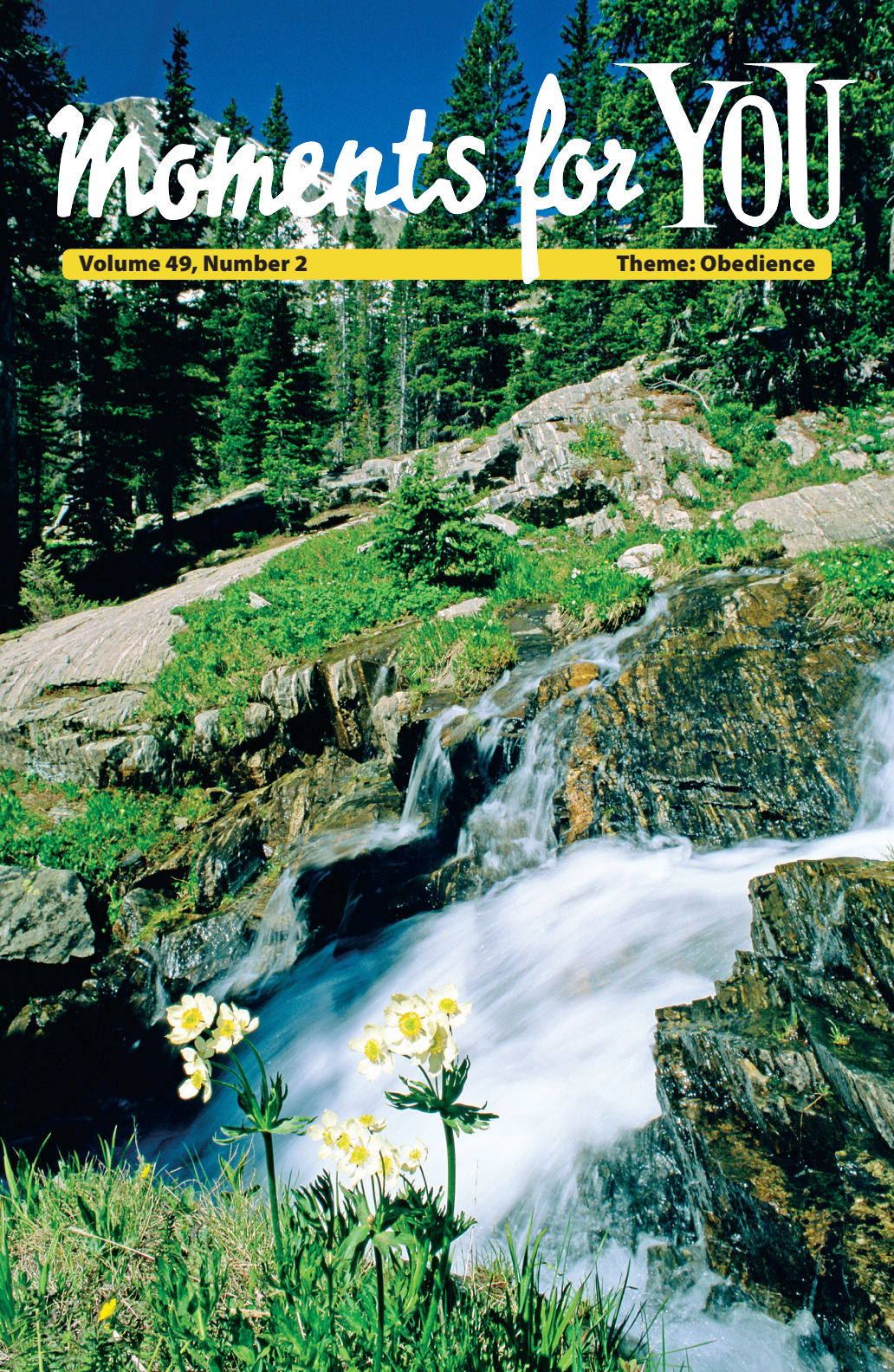


Moments for YOU

Volume 49, Number 2

Theme: Obedience



EDITOR'S NOTES

“What does God want from me?”

This is an excellent question for everyone to ask, and answering this question honestly is the first step toward living a life in tune with His will.

For many of us, our natural tendency is to assume that He would want us to do something that would appear large—either in effort or in result; something that would really (in our eyes) “make a mark” on society or be remembered for years to come. The danger in this is that we may end up mixing *our* desires with *God's* will, and though the general path we take may appear to be of His choosing, the resources, goals, and motivations may be entirely our own.

“But if I do ____, then I'll have more ____ to use for Him” is our common rationalization for continuing in such paths. The question we need to remember is, “Would the Lord really want me to offer back to Him something that He didn't want me to have in the first place?” Read the story of Saul's “partial obedience” in 1 Samuel 15:1-26 for God's answer to that question. If Saul and the people had really intended to sacrifice the spoils of victory to the Lord (and I'm not so sure that they did), it would have been quite a sacrifice—a very large thing in the eyes of all who would have seen it. But what did the Lord say? “To obey is better than sacrifice.”

As we each seek to answer the question, “What does God want from me?” let us be very careful to not mix up our own ideas and desires with His—to not substitute our rationalizations for the simple obedience that is so precious to Him. —T. Don Johnson

WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

“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).

Redemption, which is necessary because of the disobedience of man, is possible because of the obedience of Christ. Obedience is at the center of man's problem *and* God's solution. It is as we study the true meaning of obedience that we see the necessity of it for salvation, blessing and a God-honoring life.

DEFINITION

When we generally think of obedience, we think of doing what one is instructed to do. In speaking to our children we may say, “Will you please obey me and do what you are told?” What we mean is, “Please carry out my instructions.” Such uses are not far removed from the intended meaning of Scripture, but far enough that the true essence of the word is lost.

In Scripture there are several different words used for obedience. In order to establish the principal meaning of these words in our minds, we will look at two of them briefly.

Shama This Hebrew word is the primary one used throughout the Old Testament. The word has as its primary root the meaning, “to hear intelligently.” Please note the word *hear*. It is central to the meaning.

Hupakouo This Greek word is used widely throughout the New Testament. The word is really made up of two words: *hupo* meaning under or beneath, and *akouo* meaning to hear. Thus the meaning of the word could be stated as, “to hear under.” It carried with it the thought of subordination,

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or the recognition of authority and wisdom. It is an attitude of hearing.

OBEDIENCE, LEGALISM, CONFORMITY

Obedience is an attitude of heart toward a higher authority. As Christians, that higher authority is God Himself. The Lord said in John 14:15, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." It also deals with the individual's own attitude toward God.

Legalism, on the other hand, places the commandment above the commander. It places the emphasis on the law itself, and the keeping of it for law's sake, rather than to the glory of its Giver. Those who are legalistic also tend to look at the activities of others rather than their own heart (attitude). We must realize that obedience is something we will want to question our own hearts about.

Conformity deals with the outside of a man. Many conform to laws outwardly in fear of reprisal; however their attitude is certainly not one of obedience. We have all probably driven our cars at the speed limit in fear of a fine, however in our hearts we would prefer to be going at a higher speed. Conformity to a law may be a means of avoiding punishment; however the peace and joy that comes from obedience is not there.

DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH

Somehow when we think of faith, we think of something like an invisible, but powerful gas. We, as does Scripture, often contrast it to visible works. Yet faith in the Scripture is also presented as a very visible thing. James 2:26 states, "Faith without works is dead." Faith must then involve action. This action may, or may not, be visible to man but is always visible to the ever-present and discerning eye of God.

No one chapter in the Bible is more known for faith than the eleventh

chapter of Hebrews. We will therefore utilize this chapter to illustrate the relationship between faith and obedience.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear [reverence], prepared an ark" (Hebrews 11:7). There are several things that immediately become apparent about Noah as we consider this verse: he had faith in God, he listened to God, he had a fear of God, and he acted for God. How do we know that Noah had faith in God? Did he fully understand the reason for building such a large ship in a place where it had never rained? Did he question God's wisdom or authority? No, Noah *heard under*. His trust was in God. What He said, Noah did. Note that Noah acted out of reverence for God. That is a holy fear, or recognition of the authority resident in his God. Is this true of us, or do we question the reason or want a full explanation before we act?

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham, like Noah, did not question the directive of God. There is a very important lesson here for all of us. Obedience is not based on understanding, but on faith in God and in His wisdom.

How often our children respond, "Why?" when we instruct them to do something. Is that our reply to the directives found in the Word of God, or do we respond as these two men of God? Obedience requires a trust in the character and wisdom of the One in authority.

—Condensed from *Obedience: The Key to Our Problems* by Stephen J. Hulshizer. Published by Believers Bookshelf, Sunbury, PA.

OBEY THE GOSPEL

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8). These verses refer to the yet future day when He comes as Judge to destroy out of the earth those who have spurned His grace, those who have heard but have rejected the truth.

The guilty on whom He will pour out His wrath are those who *obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is something which everyone should look upon with intense solemnity. What will God do with those who have heard the message over and over again and have spurned it, who have known of Christ all their lives and have rejected His love and grace?

One of the saddest things I know is to see young men and young women growing up in Christian homes where they have had an example of piety in a godly father and/or mother, where family worship has been maintained;

The Gospel is a message from God which we are to OBEY. We are so apt to think of it as a kindly invitation which we are to accept, and to present it only in that light to others. Consequently, they think of it only as an invitation which they may decline, or at least defer indefinitely, without any serious consequences. That is to them a very fatal mistake. All who hear the gospel are responsible to render to it “the obedience of faith” (Romans 16:26).

—F.B. Hole

and yet they go out of those Christian homes to live careless, indifferent lives, sometimes saying that they had enough religion when they were young and do not want it now. How it reveals the rebellion of the heart and hardness of conscience! For such there is nothing but judgment unless there be repentance, a breaking down before God, a confession of sins and turning to Christ who has been rejected.

When the Lord Jesus comes in the clouds, in flaming fire, He will visit with intense wrath those who have sinned against the light and knowledge that God has given them concerning His beloved Son. They “shall be punished,” we read, “with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). What solemn words! What terrible warnings God has given us in order that men might face the question of their guilt and turn to Him in repentance. Those who have spurned His lovingkindness will experience the awfulness of retributive judgment in that day.

No doubt many of you who are unsaved have heard the gospel numerous times, yet you have never definitely decided for Christ. You are in the most dangerous position in which anyone could be. The Word of the Lord says, “He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

Dear reader, I plead with you, do not allow another day to pass without coming to Christ, lest you find yourself forever beyond all hope of mercy. God has given you the opportunity to believe the truth, to *obey the gospel*. The gospel is the good news that “Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). By His death, burial and resurrection, He has provided the only way of salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who trust Him as their personal Saviour—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). He has presented His Word, but if you turn away from that truth and refuse to *obey the gospel*, then God Himself will give you up to judicial judgment to be forever lost. —H.A. Ironside

Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ are those who have heard the gospel and have rejected it. The gospel is not simply a statement of facts to be believed, but a Person to be obeyed. To believe involves obedience.

—William MacDonald

CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE AND OURS

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who ... became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.... Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed...” (Philippians 2:5-12).

The obedience of Christ was marked by the unvarying character of perfect uniformity with the Father's will, and the manner of His conformity with that will was always unhesitating and unquestioning. Hence the obedience of Christ was of the very highest order, and could never be exceeded nor equalled. It is, however, the standard of excellence towards which His followers must strive to attain.

CHRIST'S MATCHLESS OBEDIENCE

Among men, obedience may be the result of persuasion or perhaps

of fear, but the obedience of our Lord had no such mixed character. It was pure at its source. It was His food to do the will of Him that sent Him. He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. “I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psalm 40:8), was the constant language of His heart. His will was always in faultless unison with the Father's.

It is true that in heaven the will of God is perfectly obeyed, but the unfallen angels in their ministry are only fulfilling the purpose of their creation by “hearkening unto the voice of His Word” (Psalm 103:20; Hebrews 1:14). But the obedient Man, Christ Jesus, was the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased when He humbled Himself, and became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death (Hebrews 2:9). It was the transcendent dignity of His person that elevated His obedience beyond all comparison on earth or in heaven. As the Eternal Son, Christ is “over all, God blessed for ever” (Romans 9:5). From the smallest creature on the earth to the most exalted archangel in the heavens nothing stirred but at His bidding, yet Christ “humbled Himself” by His own choice, and “descended into the lower parts of the earth” (Ephesians 4:9) in the course of His obedience.

What a marvel of marvels it is, that the Eternal Son should take the place of “bondman” and should learn “obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). This lesson of submission was “learned” perfectly at the time and in the manner appointed. From first to last not a single exhortation from God to quicken His service was needed by the Lord, for without exception, the Son invariably did those things that pleased the Father.

THE OBEDIENCE OF BELIEVERS

All that are Christ's are bound to exhibit the same moral attitude of implicit obedience toward Him who has called them. For as surely as we are elect, sanctified, and sprinkled, so surely are we called unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). This manner of obedience to the will of God should apply not only to our outward deeds but also to our inward desires, for we are expected to bring even every thought to "the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

But, owing to the insubjection of our nature, we cannot in any degree set forth the *obedience* of Christ unless we possess the *mind* of Christ. The Holy Spirit prefaces His portrayal of Christ's humiliating stoop to bondmanship with the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Our conformity to Christ in His lowliness must commence in the heart and in the mind. The mind of the obedient saint must ever be open in patient expectation to receive directions from on high, and his obedience will consist of complete subjection to whatever he hears.

Acceptable obedience is to run in the way of God's commandments, to have a holy care to know God's will and a saintly willingness to do it. Such ready and cheerful obedience yields a fragrance to Christ, acceptable to God our Father. Let us remember that "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). Let us delight to do the will of our God, and let us thank God that He has made us "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and given us of His Holy Spirit that the yoke of obedience may be easy and the burden of doing His will may be light.

—W.J. Hocking (adapted)

THE INVITATION

When college president Leonard Woods was in France, he was invited to dine with the king. He presented himself at the palace, and was met by the king with his accustomed courtesy, who said, "We did not know that we were to have the pleasure of your company today. You did not answer our invitation." Leonard Woods said, "I thought the invitation of a king was to be *obeyed*, not answered."

When the Spirit says "Come," it is equal to a command, and we would better put off all other engagements and come. No matter how gently and winsomely the invitation comes, let us never forget that there is a voice of royal, imperial urgency and authority behind it.

—John McNeill

JUST DO IT

"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Every man who has come to the point where he can swallow a bitter cup because he can feel the breath of Christ on it, and who can say from his heart, "Thy will, not mine, be done," has reached the highest point which he can reach.

The core principle of Christianity is what? Faith? No: more than that, deeper than that, the core principle of Christianity is obedience—obedience to Jesus Christ. Obedience is the first and the last great thing in this school of life in which the Master has placed us. Has not the Master said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15)? The motto for every Christian should be, "Find out what Jesus Christ wants you to do, and then do it." —Theodore L. Culyer

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION: What is meant by the expression “obedience of faith” found in Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26?

ANSWER: The verses in question are as follows: “By whom [Jesus Christ] we [the apostles] have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His Name” (Romans 1:5) and “But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Romans 16:26).

The book of Romans more than any other book in the Bible brings before us the gospel, the good news of God’s wonderful grace available to all—men and women, boys and girls—everywhere. This gospel is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). In order to receive that *good news* a person must believe the *bad news* as to their great need of a Saviour. The book of Romans tells us the bad news: “All are guilty before God,” “All have sinned,” and “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 3:19,23; 6:23).

These truths call for the obedience of faith. That means an act of submission to all that God has said in His infallible Word. Faith takes God at His word and believes it and submits to it. Another way to express this is to simply believe the message of the gospel by repenting and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. One commentator has described obedience of faith as: “not exactly that which faith leads and strengthens to, but faith-obedience, the heart bowing to the divine message of His grace.” This precious obedience of faith is once more mentioned at the close of this

great epistle in Romans 16:26. Also we read in Ephesians 2:8,9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Perhaps many of our readers can remember the time in their lives when they were convicted of their need of a Saviour to save them from their sins and the awful judgment that awaited them. An example of this faith-obedience is found in Acts 16:25-34. The jailor at Philippi was convicted of his sin and the judgment that would follow so he fell down before Paul and Silas and cried out: “What must I do to be saved?” The answer that Paul gave then is the same answer today: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved that very day. This is true obedience of faith. If you have never done this you can do it right now. “Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

In 1 Peter 2:7,8 we read, “Unto you therefore which believe He [the Lord Jesus Christ] is precious: but unto them which be disobedient ... even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient” Christ becomes “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” What a contrast there is between the “obedience of faith” and the disobedience of unbelief which rejects God’s Word of salvation.

—John D. McNeil

References for “Who Obeyed?” puzzle on page 16:

1 Kings 18:7-16; Mark 10:46-52;
1 Kings 17:1-6; 1 Samuel 17:15-50;
Genesis 22:1-14; Ezekiel 3:1-12;
Genesis 6:7-22; Acts 10:1-8;
Esther 4:7-9, 7:1-6

WHO OBEYED?

For each of the following statements, fill in the name of the Bible character who demonstrated obedience. The first letters of their names are filled in for you. If you need more help, turn to page 15 for the Scripture references where you can look up the answers.

- O** _____ I went to deliver a message to my master Ahab as directed by a prophet, even though it could have cost me my life.
- B** _____ I suffered an impairment until I called out to Jesus for mercy, and then quickly went to Him when He called me.
- E** _____ I went at the command of the Lord and hid in the wilderness, where He miraculously provided for me.
- D** _____ I obeyed the voice of my father to deliver supplies to my brothers, and the Lord used me to win a great victory there.
- I** _____ Though I was stronger than he was, I obeyed my father when he wanted to tie me up and put my life in danger.
- E** _____ I obeyed when the Lord told me to consume His Word and then go to proclaim it to those who would not listen.
- N** _____ I spent more than one hundred years of my life in the process of constructively obeying a single command of the Lord.
- C** _____ Though I was not one of God's people, I obeyed when an angel told me to call for a man who could tell me words of life.
- E** _____ I obeyed my uncle's plea and risked my life to speak to the king to spare my people.

MOVING FORWARD

The Bible rings with one long demand for obedience. The key word of Deuteronomy is, "Observe and do." The burden of our Lord's farewell discourse is, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." We must not question or reply or excuse ourselves. We must not pick and choose our way. We must not think that obedience in one direction will compensate for disobedience in another. God gives one command at a time; if we obey this He will flood our soul with blessing, and lead us forward into new paths and pastures. But if we refuse we shall remain stagnant, make no progress in Christian experience, and lack both power and joy. —F.B. Meyer

POWER OF OBEDIENCE

We hear much these days about God's sovereignty and man's free agency. Christ said to the woman of Canaan, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28). Here is something that looks like *human* sovereignty and *divine* agency. Free to do what we please because we please to do God's will. Such is the free agency of faith that takes hold of the arm that moves the world. Such free agency Moses had when the Red Sea was no obstacle. The walls of Jericho fell before this free agency of faith. By means of it any little David is more than a match for the strongest Goliath. Armed with it, Gideon and his three hundred were invincible. —A.C. Dixon