

Russell Kelfer

Rewards for Obedience

517-A

Series: Obedience

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

Rewards for Obedience

We have been studying Joshua 1 and looking at the subject of obedience. We have learned that the Word of God shall not depart out of our mouths and that we should memorize it and lay it upon our hearts. We need to memorize the Word so that we can meditate on it day and night. The reason we meditate on it is that we might observe to do according to all that is written therein. In other words, the goal of memorization and meditation is obedience.

We have been dealing for the past five lessons with the subject of obedience. We have looked at the perspective of it, the practicality of it, and the performance of it. In this lesson, we will begin the fourth part of this series, which is “The Principles of Obedience.”

The word “principles” simply means concepts confirmed in Scripture that reveal the mind of God. We might expand that definition to say that they reveal the mind of God in such a way that the Christian can operate in the freedom of the Spirit without compromising God’s will. In other words, principles are the undergirding platform on which the Word of God speaks to the believer. Later in this lesson we will look at how we can get into the principles of God. The principles of God are the concepts in Scripture that give us the freedom to operate within the framework of the will of God.

Not everything we are to do is spelled out in detail to us in Scripture. It does not always say, “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not.” It is great that it doesn’t. But, the principles, applied by the Holy Spirit to our individual lives, will give us the discernment and the authority to move throughout our lives in harmony with the will of God.

In the Scripture, we can find principles regarding our finances. Scripture does not tell us everything that we are to do or not to do with our money, but there are some underlying principles that allow us to apply the concepts of the Word whenever we have a

decision to make regarding our finances.

Our roles in marriage are not completely spelled out in the Word. All of our responsibilities are not outlined for us. However, the concepts of the roles we are to have in marriage are clearly defined. The principles can be applied to every decision we need to make as a husband or a wife.

The same thing is true regarding our basic conduct. The Scripture does not tell us every specific place we can and cannot go, but principles are given to us that, when rightly applied by the Spirit, will give us total freedom. We will be free in the Spirit to do what we need to do and want to do, because we will know what God wants us to do and that will be our desire. This line of thought is also true in the area of yoking and partnerships.

In all of these areas there are specific laws of “do’s” and “don’ts”. However, the bulk of our growth in Christ is the result of growing to the point that the principles of Scripture become the undergirding pillars that make our life work. As we study the principles of obedience, we need to remind ourselves that the subject of obedience is the process of responding to knowledge by following instruction. This means knowing what to do and then doing what we are told. We have dealt with some principles already in this study. They were the basic principles, the pillars on which the foundation was built.

We dealt with the perspective of God. We learned that the standards of God never change. A lie is a lie is a lie. A lie to God 6,000 years ago is still a lie today. God has not changed His concept of what is acceptable in the form of truth. This is a concept regarding obedience.

We learned that God measures our love for Him by the amount of our obedience. This is a basic pillar principle.

We then learned that there are at least four ways that God judges our obedience. The first way is to see whether our obedience is immediate or delayed? Is our obedience complete? Do we obey to the letter? Do we obey to the end? Do we finish what we start? Do we obey continuously or sporadically? Lastly, do we obey joyfully? This is where we finished in the last lesson. In closing that last lesson, we dealt with the concept of discerning the difference between the leading of the Spirit and the leading of the emotions. In order to do that we would follow a pattern something like this:

Rewards for Obedience

First, we obey whether we feel like it or not. If the Word of God says to do it, then do it.

Secondly, as we obey and after we obey, we deal with our attitude.

Thirdly, ask for and expect a spirit of joy, but be sure to ask. Meanwhile, we continue to obey.

Fourthly, do a study and learn what joy is. Oftentimes we say that we are obeying, but we don't have the joy. We do not often understand the difference between joy and happiness. Joy is a gift from God. Joy is permanent in nature rather than temporary. Joy comes from being in the presence of God. Joy comes from appropriating the Word of God. Joy comes through tears.

Fifthly, in order to appropriate the joy of God in our obedience, we must learn to meditate. These are the underlying principles we need to remember as we go through this study.

I want to begin now to deal with general principles. These are principles we find by simply doing a cross-reference in the Scripture. We will look at the words "obey", "obedience" and some others. These are general principles that will help us to have an understanding of when, how and why we are to obey.

The more principles of Scripture that we understand, the more freedom we will have to obey. However, principles can lead us into bondage if they become legalism. This is something that we have to be very careful about. Sometimes after we return from a seminar, a Bible study or a Sunday School class, God will impress a new principle on our hearts. We can allow that principle to become a law rather than allowing the Spirit to apply it to our situations. Just because it worked in someone else's life, we wrongly believe that it will have to work in ours. We begin then to say, "Thus saith the Lord." We have to have careful discernment.

Imagine, if you will, that you are moving towards the center of the will of God. Suppose, as a result of having gone to a seminar, you have a conviction by the Spirit that you are to gain a clear conscience. Suppose that you are moving in that direction toward the center of the will of God. If Satan cannot stop you, he will try to drive you beyond the will of God and turn that area into a legalistic straight jacket that will lead you back into bondage.

The same is true in the subject of submission to authority or any principle of Scripture that we learn. We must recognize

Rewards for Obedience

that the concepts and the principles of Scripture were designed to draw us into the center of the will of God where, in obeying those principles, we would be free in Christ. If we allow those principles to become some kind of legalistic bondage, the result is, rather than releasing ourselves into God's hands, we then become frustrated and anxious over them. We then lose the very victory God wanted us to gain.

Basically, the principles of obedience are designed to bring us into obedience. They are also designed to give us the freedom of God within the spirit of obedience.

Principle 1 – Our knowledge of God and our obedience are interrelated. This may seem too general. I want to give you three basic concepts wrapped into one.

Concept 1- The more we know of Him, the more we are accountable to obey. We studied this in an earlier lesson. The more of His Word, His works, His worth and His ways that are familiar to you, the more accountable you are to obey. If you have never heard a message on certain concepts or principles in Scripture, your level of accountability to God is less. However, every time you hear a concept and respond to it, you become more accountable.

Concept 2- The more we know of Him, the more we are motivated to obey. As with people, the more closely you become aligned with someone, the less you want to offend or grieve their spirit. Husbands and wives find this as they live together for a number of years. They begin to know one another better and because of the love they have for one another, if they truly love one another, they will grieve when the conscience of the other is wounded. This can be true in an area in which a year or two before it would never have bothered them. I have heard a number of people say, "I don't know if this is the thing to do or not, but I know how my mom feels about it and the last thing I want to do is hurt my mom." The child doesn't want to grieve someone who has given so much of themselves to them.

This is the concept in terms of our relationship with God. The more closely you become related in terms of relationship to God, the less you want to hurt Him. The closer you become to God, the less you want to grieve His Spirit through disobedience. The end motivation, the greatest motivation to obedience is love. But as we will learn in the next lesson, there are steps that lead to

Rewards for Obedience

that. One of these steps is fear. It is far better to obey first from another motivation and develop the motivation of love. The end result should be that we obey Him because we love Him, and we love Him because He first loved us.

Concept 3- The more we obey, the greater is our capacity to know Him. This is the other side of the coin. Conversely, the more we obey Him, the more capacity we have to know Him. The more you know God, the more you want to obey. The more you obey, the more capacity you have to know. It is a circle. The key is that the time we spend alone with God and in His Word is what is going to give us the capacity for obedience. The road to knowing God intimately is paved with obedience. Many of you have said, “This is such a dry time in my life. I don’t seem to have a handle on a real, personal relationship with God.” Later, you realize that there is an area of disobedience that is frustrating the will of God in your life. When that area is dealt with, the freedom returns.

Let’s go to the Scriptures and find the principles that illustrate the relationship between obedience and knowledge. Exodus 5 says,

Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

And Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.”
(Exodus 5:1,2 NKJV)

The principle is very clear. Let’s take a quick illustration. Picture a work place where the employees are out on the sales floor with customers. The boss comes out of his office and tells the employees, “Clean up this place.” The employees then take the broom and mop and tidy up the place. Hopefully, the customers do not join in this activity. What made the difference? Why do the customers not obey the request? It is a matter of relationship. The customers don’t have the motivation to obey because they are not being paid for it. They don’t have an authority figure in the situation. The whole concept to remember is that you will obey based upon relationship.

Another illustration is a parent with six children entering a café in town where you are eating. There are other parents eating with their children. At the end of the meal the parent stands up and says, “Okay, children, let’s go.” I assume that only six

Rewards for Obedience

children get up to go. The rest of the children in the café will stay with their families. The point is that they are not going to follow and obey the other parent because there is no relationship established. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me.”¹ They won’t listen to the voice of a stranger. They follow Him.² The reason is that they have a relationship.

The same thing is true of a dog. There could be five dogs together, but as you say, “Come Spot, come,” only your dog Spot will respond to your call. Basically, the natural response of your dog is that he heard the voice of his master.

This whole concept is that if you give principles of obedience to unbelievers, you do not have a prayer.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:14 NKJV)

An unbeliever cannot understand Christian principles and concepts. A counseling situation using these principles with them will be both awkward and difficult. The reason is that they don’t have an antenna to receive the signal. It is like giving a game plan to someone who has never played the game. Christian principles were designed for believers who have the spirit to interpret those principles in their lives.

The first principle you need to give unbelievers is the principle of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus Christ that can cleanse them from their sin. They then can receive the Holy Spirit so that they can receive the input of the Word of God. God can then be allowed to live His life through them by His grace. An unbeliever cannot receive those concepts or principles just as in our illustration of the boss, the employees and the innocent bystanders or the children in the café that do not belong to that particular parent. You will respond to the voice of one that you know. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You are of your father, the devil, and you will do what he tells you to because you are not Mine.”

Another passage is found in I John 2,

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

¹ John 10:27

² John 10:4,5

Rewards for Obedience

He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (I John 2:3-6 NKJV)

Here is your knowledge of the assurance of your salvation. This is the new motivation to obey.

Another passage is found in Exodus 19:5-6. This passage deals with the concept that the children of Israel were a chosen vessel of God. It tells us that they were a holy nation, a royal priesthood. We are told these same things in 1 Peter. The whole concept here is that there are positional and actual possessions. Positionally, we are a chosen, holy priesthood by God. God looks down at us and sees us as a holy nation, though we may not live a holy life. He sees us as part of a royal priesthood, though we might not live a life of royalty in the spirit. He sees us as a peculiar people, but not in the way we look at the word *peculiar*. He looks at us as a separate, called apart people, special unto Himself. We are set aside by God for obedience to God in order to become a showcase for God of God. That is the whole concept.

However, the process of becoming and being what we are in God's mind is the principle of obedience. Philippians 3:10 is another passage we can look at. It says, that I may know Him, that is the goal. What does knowing Him mean? It means experiencing His power and His fellowship. How do we get His power? We get His power by dying to self and being resurrected to a new life in Christ. How do we get His fellowship? We get His fellowship by suffering. What is the end to this? The end is that we may be conformed to His image. What does it mean "to be conformed to His image"? An image is that which is obedient to the movement and likeness of its source. We need to realize, then, that to be obedient is what we are called to be if we are in the image of Christ. We are to do what Christ did. We are to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The cross means something different in our lives than it did in Jesus'. Nevertheless, the principle is the same. We are called to be conformed to His image. An image is that which perfectly reflects its source. If we look in the mirror, our image does the same thing we do. "To be conformed to that image" is

Rewards for Obedience

our goal. The word “conform” means to be fitted into a mold. In Romans 12:2a we read,

And do not be conformed to this world, (NKJV)

In the Phillips Translation, it says,

Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.

But we are told in Phillipians 3:10 that we are to let the Spirit of Christ conform us to His image. We are to let His image squeeze us into His likeness. An image is simply that which is totally obedient. So to get to know Him and His power and His fellowship, we are then to be conformed. The principle is that we will know Him proportionate to our obedience.

In John 15, we see the principle of abiding,

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. (John 15:3 NKJV)

The New American Standard says, “You are already clean”. We are already clean through the Word. Positionally this work is already done. Verses 4-6 say that we cannot be used of God or bear fruit unless we learn to obey.

Secondly, we learn to abide. Verses 10 and 14 of that same chapter tell us that the key to abiding is obedience. Let's turn to John 15,

If you keep My commandments [and do what I say], you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:10 NKJV)

So the key to abiding is obedience. We then see in verse 14 that the key to friendship with God is obedience,

You are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you. (John 15:14 NKJV)

Principle 2- God, in the midst of His grace, still rewards obedience. We will not only receive rewards in this life, but there is a reward platform in heaven that you and I will come before one day. This is called the Bema Seat or Judgment Seat of Christ. You and I will stand before God on that day as Christians. We will not be judged for our sins because our sins were judged at Calvary. There will be another occasion when all those in the world who have refused to receive Jesus Christ as Savior will be judged according to their sins. This is the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20. But you and I will stand before the

Rewards for Obedience

Bema Seat of Christ as believers. We will be judged according to that which we have done whether it be good or bad.

There are many misconceptions of this experience. You may not totally agree with my thoughts, but at least hear me through and study it for yourself. We will find several portraits concerning this. In Deuteronomy 11 and Jeremiah 42 we read that God's standards for obedience and reward have not changed. The portraits are always found in the Old Testament and the principles by and large are found in the New Testament. We learn the principles of the New Testament and then turn back to the Old Testament to see how it works in real life. We will find in Deuteronomy 11 and Jeremiah 42 that God's principle is very basic. If you obey you will be rewarded. If you disobey, there will be judgment.

In the Christian experience we come to a totally different sphere. We come to the sphere of rewards according to that which we have done. We need to understand who it is that does it, what it is that is done, and what kind of rewards there will be for obedience. This will be the subject of the remainder of our lesson.

Let's remember that you are not under condemnation for your sins if you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You will not appear and be judged for your sin. We read in Romans 8:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in
Christ Jesus, (Romans 8:1a NKJV)

The sin question was settled at Calvary. You were judged according to the blood of Jesus Christ and found to be holy.

not by works of righteousness which we have done, but
according to His mercy He saved us, (Titus 3:5 NKJV)

There is present judgment. These are the judgments that come from the disciplines of God found in Hebrews 12:6-9. These are the disciplines of God that keep the believer in line. These disciplines help to keep us obedient.

I want to deal now with the future judgment of the believer, that is the Bema Seat of Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is the coming judgment. We will deal with three aspects of this judgment.

The first aspect is that those things which our life has produced will be tested by fire. We find this in I Corinthians 3:9-15.

Rewards for Obedience

Our life will be tested according to whether it be good or bad in the eyes of God. We see this in II Corinthians 5:9-10. There will be crowns given according to that which is pleasing to God. We find this in Revelation 4:10.

What kind of crowns will we be given in heaven?

1- *The incorruptible crown.* This is the result of discipline. It is found in I Corinthians 9:24-27. This is the incorruptible crown, the crown of preparation.

2- *The crown of rejoicing.* We find this in I Thessalonians 2:19-20. This is the result of spiritual reproduction. It is the crown of presentation.

3- *The crown of righteousness* is found in II Timothy 4:5-8. It is the result of expectancy or an expectant spirit. It is the crown of preservation.

4- *The crown of life* is found in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10. This crown is the result of testing. It is the crown of perseverance.

5- *The crown of glory* is found in I Peter 5:1-4. This is the result of the example. It is the crown of portrayal.

These are the crowns that are mentioned in Scripture. There is also mentioned the loss of crowns. We read of this in Matthew 6:1-18, Colossians 2:18, II John 8, and Revelation 3:11.

I want to clarify and crystallize these three passages and read them in a paraphrase so that we can grasp three basic concepts about the coming judgment based upon obedience. We will look at what it is and what it isn't.

First of all, what is the Bema seat? Who is the judge? What kind of judge is he? II Corinthians 5:10, paraphrased, reads as such:

For we will all make an appearance at the awards platform in heaven in the presence of Christ Himself so that He may reward us for what He has been allowed to do in our bodies, separating that which is acceptable from that which is not acceptable to Him.

The Bema Seat is a place where all Christians will go. You will notice that as we talk about the Great White Throne judgment that the words that are used are "dead", "gathered", "judged" and "cast." As we read about the Bema Seat, the words used are "we", "appear" and "receive".

Rewards for Obedience

Jesus is the judge. What kind of judge is He? My wife and I went to a pageant. The judges were not passing out sentences. No one there was condemned. The whole point is that the judges were passing out rewards. To some they gave one level of reward. To another, they gave another level of reward. They were the judges, but they were judging according to that which pleased them. The judgment here is not a judgment whereas condemnation is passed out because “there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1), rather it is a judging according to that which has been done.

The second passage to refer to is I Corinthians 3:10-15. We would ask ourselves, “What will be judged?” and “What will happen to that which is bad or unacceptable?” This passage would be paraphrased like this:

I have by God’s direction been used to lay the foundation of your faith. Others have had the privilege of building on it.

There is only one foundation and that is a person, Jesus Christ Himself.

You can use two kinds of material to build on your foundation, things that perish like wood, hay and stubble or things that are imperishable like gold, silver and precious stones.

But the day is coming when the building will be set on fire by the presence of God Himself and what remains unburned will be revealed as of God.

There will be rewards for everything not burned in His presence.

But even if nothing is left, the foundation remains. You are eternally saved but as one who has been saved from a burning building with no new structure to show for your life’s work. (I Corinthians 3:10-15 paraphrase)

The second aspect of this subject is that the very presence of God will be that which consumes that which is not acceptable to Himself. The Shekinah glory of God cannot tolerate sin. That which we have done will be consumed the minute we enter into His presence. The only things that will remain will be that which He did through us in response to obedience.

Principle 3- is found in paraphrasing Revelation 4:10-11. If we receive rewards for what we do, and if that which we have not done or that which has been done in the flesh will be consumed

Rewards for Obedience

in His presence, what will we do with our rewards? Will we wear them around our necks like the Olympians? Will we wear them as medals on our clothing? Will we have plaques on the wall?

The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they worshiped him, the Eternal Living One, and cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

“O Lord, you are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for you have created all things. They were created and called into being by your act of will.”

(Revelation 4:10,11 NKJV)

In other words, the rewards that you receive will be like jewels. They will not be for your pleasure, but for you to have more with which to worship the King.

We can see the pattern begin to emerge. That which has been done in obedience by the Spirit in our lives will remain. When we come into the presence of God, not to be condemned for our sins, rather to be rewarded for what He has done, we can't lose, can we? You have been rewarded for what He did. The rewards will be all that is left after you have walked into His presence, because His Shekinah glory will dissolve that which He has not done. All that will remain will be those things which He has done through obedient hearts in our response of obedience. This is all that will remain. These things will be jewels in our crown. We will not wear these crowns because we are not worthy to wear them. We will have more with which to worship Him.

The principle is clear. The Bema Seat of Christ is an awards platform. There will be an awards presentation that will take place in heaven. Jesus Himself will gather all of His children together. When He comes into our presence, that which He has not done will be immediately dissolved. That which remains will take the form of rare jewels to be put in our crowns. We will cast these crowns at His feet in worship to Him.

I want to close by reading a poem that illustrates this. It is simply called “The Bema Seat of Christ.” Try to picture in your mind that occasion and see what affect this has in the areas of obedience in our lives.

Rewards for Obedience

THE FESTIVAL'S BEGINNING

The Festival's beginning,
The Hour is at hand,
And a hush that stills a whisper
Has settled on the land.

'Tis the time for the rewards,
The crowd has gathered near.
The Master is approaching,
But there is no sign of fear.

For tis not a time of judgment
For the judgment time is past;
The Master has come this time
To reveal what works will last.

Lo, He comes! What blinding glory
The glow of His attire,
Seems to light up all of Heaven
As a blazing, searing, fire.

"What is happening?" we wonder,
For as He passes through,
We can feel a Holy Power
And our lives are passed in view.

And the glory of His presence
Like a flaming fire turned loose,
Now consumes the things in our lives
That He did not produce.

And as He passes by us,
Lo, we see the ashes gone,
And the things that still remain
Are those that He Himself has done.

Oh, the Glory of those things He did,
They shine like jewels rare,
They sparkle in His presence
And reflect that He is there!

Like crowns of righteous royalty
They glisten in the light,
And the only thing reflected
Is the Master's face in sight.

Rewards for Obedience

Overwhelmed by all His love
We approach His Bema Seat,
And without a word we cast
The jewels in worship at His feet.

Oh, what joy, none can describe it!
As we worship Him in song,
As we sing, "Hosannah! Praise Him!"
At His feet, where we belong.

Those who let Him rule and reign in life
Find Heaven now complete,
For the things He did have now become
Rare jewels at His feet.

And we can but kneel before Him
For His loving eyes to see,
The rewards He gives belong to Him
For all eternity!

We are laying up treasures in heaven. There will be rewards by degrees, and all else will be consumed by His presence. Knowing therefore these things shall come to pass, what manner of men and women ought we to be?

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer