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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **What makes obedience difficult?**

There are at least four things which make obedience very difficult for most people:

## 1) **Obedience is difficult when someone is not in the mood to obey.**

Obedience is not impossible when someone is not in the mood, but it does become very difficult. Jesus, for example, was not in the mood to go to the cross and die, but He surrendered what he wanted for what God wanted.

### **Luke 22:41-42**

<sup>41</sup> [Jesus] was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; **nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.**"

This passage clearly indicates two wills: *The will of the one praying and the will of God.* (Remember – the one praying here was Jesus.) When Jesus submitted and went to the cross, He demonstrated that it is possible to obey God even when a person is not in the mood to do what God said.

However, most people simply do what they wish. They aren't in the mood to obey. They aren't in the mood to submit. They aren't in the mood to sacrifice their will for the will of the Father in heaven.

### **Luke 13:34**

<sup>34</sup> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but **you were not willing!**"

Here Jesus is lamenting over those Jews who eventually would crucify Him on the cross. Why were these Jews disobedient? What was the problem? Jesus said they were not "*willing.*" In other words, they were not in the mood to submit to the will of God.

### **John 5:40**

<sup>40</sup> ... you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

So obedience is very difficult, but it becomes even more difficult when someone is not in the mood to obey.

## **2) Obedience is difficult when it's inconvenient.**

In other words, many people are willing to obey as long as it doesn't interfere with their lives and the schedule which they already have.

### **Acts 24:25**

<sup>25</sup> Now as [Paul] reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; **when I have a convenient time I will call for you.**"

Here is Felix. He was a Roman Governor in Caesarea. He listened to the gospel being preached by the apostle Paul. The gospel requires obedience (Rom 10:16). Felix was unwilling to obey because it was not convenient to do so at this time.

Unfortunately, there is no record in history that Felix ever obeyed. Inconvenience kept this governor from obeying the gospel.

## **3) Obedience is difficult when someone does not understand the command given.**

Let's face it, when a command from God makes sense and seems reasonable, it's not really that difficult to obey. But when a command from God seems to be unreasonable and doesn't make any sense, it becomes more difficult to obey.

Think about the Captain of the Syrian army named Naaman. The story of Naaman is told in 2 Kings 5. He had the dreaded disease of leprosy. He was told by a captive Israelite that if he would go to the prophet Elisha, he could be healed of this terrible condition. When Naaman went to see the prophet, he was told to go dip seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman became angry. He didn't understand why he was being told to go dip in the Jordan. He had preconceived ideas of the prophet coming out and laying hands on him and healing him. He turned and went away in a rage. But one of Naaman's servants said this:

## **2 Kings 5:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> ... "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

<sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Many people today are like this. They don't understand the need to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). To them it seems unreasonable that the blood of Jesus is applied at the point of baptism in water (Gal 3:27). Because they don't understand, they don't obey.

Obedience is difficult when people do not understand. But God often gives commands to test men and women – to see if they will obey simply because He said so.

## **4) Obedience is difficult when obeying God would be embarrassing.**

Peer-pressure is very, very real. When everyone around us is mocking and ridiculing the idea of obeying God, it begins to affect us. We have a desire to “fit in” with those around us. We find it difficult to go against the crowd and do what God says when everyone else around us is disobeying.

But we must be careful with this kind of thinking. We must decide: *Who do I want to please – God who made me and will one day judge me or mortal men?*

## **James 4:4**

<sup>4</sup> Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Listen, you cannot afford to have God as an enemy. You need God to be your friend and He is a friend to those who obey Him.

### **James 2:21-23**

<sup>21</sup> **Was not Abraham our father justified by works** when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? <sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And **he was called the friend of God.**

**SUMMARY:** Obedience is difficult:

- When someone is not in the mood to obey.
- When it's not convenient to obey.
- When someone doesn't understand the command given.
- And when obedience would be embarrassing.

Obedience is difficult, but it's worth doing. When the Lord comes again, only those who have obeyed His will are going to be saved. (Mt 7:21; Heb 5:9).

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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