

Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Obedience

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-115

We are studying the anatomy of the church, and we're going to continue that study this morning. We've taken a little break from our look through 2 Corinthians, and are having a wonderful time in this particular study. In spite of the identity crisis in the church, the Bible is very clear about what a church should be. Scripture lays out a definitive way in which life in the church is to be conducted. There really aren't any mysteries in terms of how the church is to conduct itself and what the nature of its ministries are to be. In fact, God has outlined definitely a right way to do work in the church. It's very, very direct and easy to see. Cultures change, styles change from time to time and place to place, but the character of the church doesn't change, and God's design for how the church functions is clearly revealed in Scripture.

The sad reality is that when the church deviates from the plan there is chaos, and that's the kind of thing the church is experiencing in the world today. Speaking of the right way to do things, in a recent issue of a magazine I never read, called *Meat and Poultry*, the editors quoted from another magazine I never read, *Feathers*, that is the publication of the California Poultry Industry. But the following story was irresistible. It seems the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has a unique way of testing the strength of windshields on airplanes. The device is a gun that launches a dead chicken right at the plane's windshield at approximately the speed the plane flies. The theory is that if the windshield doesn't crack from the carcass impact, it will survive a real collision with a bird during flight.

Well, it seems the British were very interested in this and wanted to test a windshield on a brand new high-powered locomotive they're developing. They borrowed the FAA's chicken launcher, loaded the chicken, and fired. The ballistic chicken shattered the windshield, went right through the heart of the engineer's chair, smashed the instrument panel behind him, and imbedded itself in the back wall of the engine cab. The British were stunned, and asked the FAA to recheck the test to see if everything was done correctly. The FAA reviewed the test thoroughly, and had only one recommendation: thaw the chicken. Now, I'm trying to make that into a parable for this sermon, you understand, so you have to come back from that hilarious scene.

There's a right way to do things. And if you do things the wrong way, the result is chaotic. There's a right way to do things in the church, and the Word of God has laid out the formulas for that. Jesus said, "I will build My church," and He has established the plans, and He has revealed them to those who are employed in the building. Those of us who lead in the church, who serve in the church, have the plan in hand, in having the New Testament. As I said, styles may vary from time to time and

culture to culture, but the basics for the life of the church are non-negotiable, they are not interchangeable, they are fixed. And we're reviewing them in this series, around the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ.

There are a number of ways in which the church is described metaphorically in the Bible; as a flock, and as a family, and as a household, and as a temple, and so forth, even as a vine and branches. But the most rich metaphor for the church is the body idea, that we are like a physical body attached to the head, the head being Christ, and His life and direction and guidance flowing out through the body. And so we've borrowed this metaphor and extended it a little bit in our series on the anatomy of the church. It allows us, this metaphor does, to consider all the salient elements for life in the church, and we started out letting you know that there would be four categories we would look at.

If, in a very simple way, we divide the body into four parts – the skeleton, the internal systems, the muscles, and the flesh – we can take a look at those areas, and get pretty good insight into what the church is to be. We started out with the skeleton. We said there are some things that are fixed, that are rigid, that are non-negotiable, that give the church its form, and those things are skeletal in the life of the church. And we said they were the honor of God, the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the presence of holiness, the proclamation of truth, and submission to spiritual authority. That's framework. But like a living body, the framework itself doesn't have the life.

Now, you've gone to the doctor's office, or into the lab in high school or college, and you've seen a skeleton suspended on a hook on a metal frame, and you know that it isn't alive. It has the structure but it doesn't have the life. You have to hang on that skeleton that internal systems that cause the fluids to flow and maintain the life. And so we move, then, from discussing the skeleton into the internal systems, and we're talking about what it is that has to happen on the inside of the lives of believers for the church to be what God wants the church to be. Spiritual attitudes, spiritual motives, spiritual convictions – that's what we're talking about.

Spiritual ministry in the church applies the truth of God and the means of grace to the soul. The work is the work on the inner man. That's what we do. Legalism is content to work on the outside. It's content to conform people externally. That's what legalism does. It manipulates people, it intimidates people, it somehow promises them rewards, or it brings them under fear, and it gets them to conform externally to certain behaviors. But that doesn't accomplish the work of God. That's legalism, and legalism is rejected by the Word of God, as you know. We're not interested in controlling people; we're interested in seeing the heart transformed. It's the same thing in parenting, it's a good analogy.

It's not difficult to control your children. You're bigger, you're smarter, you're more powerful, you have a better way with words, you have all the money, you control the car, you've got the keys to everything. It's not difficult to control your children. But it's a whole other thing to see their heart transformed, that's a completely different mission. And that's what the church must recognize.

Controlling can be done a lot of ways, but change can only be done one way, and that's by heart work, working on the heart, and then that takes care of the outside. Spiritual attitudes are the internal life of the church, and those attitudes have to do with motives and convictions, building those into people.

The issues of the heart are where the church has to spend its time, and those are the internal systems. That's where the life flows, and apart from that, the church is really dead. To sort of set this thing in motion, I want you to look at Ephesians, chapter 3, and as I've noted for you, we're going to go through a lot of different passages as we sort of reach back and pull together a summary of all of these salient matters with regard to life in the church. Something we really need to do, because our church is growing, and we have so many new folks, and we want all of you to understand why we do what we do, and what the emphasis really is. And one of those very important passages is Ephesians, chapter 3.

It takes us into the heart of one of the noble pastors, of course, of all time, the apostle Paul. We get an idea of what he was really after in his ministry, and it was the heart. There are a number of notable passages in which he makes that clear, but this one is perhaps as clear as any of them. And we find that his desire for heart work is manifest in how he prayed for his people. Look at verse 14. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." For this reason – a reason he is about to tell you – he prays. And he prays to the Father, because the Father is the creator of every family in heaven and on earth.

In other words, God is the creator of every family and every kind of family, whether you're talking about the human family in general, or whether you're talking about what is called the nuclear or individual family in particular, or whether you're talking about the spiritual family of the church, the body of Christ – God is the Father of all of that. God is the one from whom everything derives its life, and not only in the human world, but everywhere else in creation as well. So he is saying, "I go back to the source. I go back to the one who is the creator. And in regard to the family that is spiritual, I pray this – this is the reason I pray." Here's the reason – verse 16: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit" – here's the key – "in the inner man."

The issue is the heart. We know that. This is a very good emphasis, however. The issue is not what someone is conformed to doing on the outside; the issue is what is the heart condition. "Doing the will of God from the heart," Paul says in Ephesians 6:6, at the end of that verse – doing the will of God from the heart. Paul says, "What I'm concerned about is the inner man. I'm concerned about the inside, because it is out of the heart that everything proceeds." "It's not that which goes into a man that defiles him," Jesus said, "it's that which comes out of him." And since the defilement is on the inside, that's where the work has to be done.

Moving back into a sort of a medical metaphor for a moment, men need heart surgery. They have sick hearts, diseased hearts, and the work has to be done internally. You've got to cut through and get to the inside to do the work. And that's what Paul prayed. When he bowed his knee to the one who is the creator and the source of every family in earth, including the spiritual family, he asked Him to work on the inside. In fact he prayed that according to the riches of His glory – and there are no limits to those riches – according to the vastness of God's spiritual riches, that He would grant through the Spirit, strengthening with power in the inner man. In other words, Paul prayed for strong inner men – that there would be a strong spiritual heart, a strong inner man. That's where the work had to be done.

Then notice, in verse 17, he even moves beyond that. He wanted that inner man strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit, "In order that" – or so that – "in order that" – it's a *hina* purpose clause – "Christ may settle down" – *katoike*, to settle down – "in your hearts." Now, let me stop there for a moment. Christ, if you're a believer, is already in your heart, but He may not be settled down, He may be up all the time fixing things. You remember that wonderful little book, *My Heart, Christ's Home*. I read it as a young man, and it had a marvelous effect upon me. It's a picture of a house, like the heart, and Christ comes in, and He goes into the living room, which is the realm of fellowship, and He goes into the dining room, which is the realm of appetites, and He goes into the library, which is the realm of thought.

And there's work to do in all those places, and all those places there receive His purging. And then, all of a sudden, when all of that is done, there's a terrible stench coming out of somewhere, and Christ finds a closet and opens it up, and there are all the hidden iniquities. And Christ can't settle down and be at home until all that work is done. And that's what the apostle Paul is praying. He's praying that the Spirit of God would strengthen your inner man, so that sin would be dealt with, and the response to the cleansing of Christ would be a complete response, and Christ could settle down and be at rest, because sin is being dealt with. That's what Paul's praying for.

He's praying for the Spirit to come, bring His strength to the inner man, do a cleansing work, so that Christ is comfortable in your life. Very opposite would be 1 Corinthians 6, where you go to a harlot and join Christ to that harlot. I can't imagine anything more disconcerting to the one who is joined with the believer than being so joined to a harlot; such an embarrassment and a shame to Christ that would be. The opposite is to have Christ settle down and be at rest in your life, because holiness is there, sin is being dealt with. And when Christ settles down, something else happens. You become rooted and grounded in His love, you're able to understand with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

The Holy Spirit comes in, gives you strength in the inner man, sin is dealt with, Christ is at home, and He exudes His love into every part of your life, and out to those around you. And you literally are a

walking advertisement, a walking testimony, a walking witness to the transforming love of Christ.

And that's not all, the end of verse 9, another sequence, another purpose clause: "That you may be filled up with all the fullness of God." Now, the progression is amazing. The Spirit comes first, and brings you the power to control that inner man, to bring that inner man into harmony with God's truth. Christ cleanses your life, settles down, is at home. And then you're flooded with the fullness of God – the whole trinity is there.

As a result of that, verse 20, you become "able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." And as a result of that, "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." The ultimate purpose of a life that glorifies God is produced. That was Paul's prayer. I mean it is a massive reduction of all the work of sanctification into this one prayer. That the Spirit would come in and do His work, and not be quenched or grieved; that Christ would be free to cleanse every area of your life, so that He is at rest, and at peace, and comfortable in your life.

Then the fullness of God comes in, and you begin to exhibit all the attributes of God, because Christ is being fully formed in you, and then you become useful to do beyond what you could even ask or think. And in the end, all the glory in the church goes to the Lord of the church, the head of the church, Jesus Christ. And all of that is an inside work, all of that is an inside operation. This is the long haul, folks. This is doing it the hard way, but it's the only right way – building into people convictions, and motives, and attitudes that cause them to do the work of God from the heart. Let me expand on that just a bit. Go back to Romans, chapter 2 – and this is still kind of just introducing this need for heart attitudes.

But in Romans, chapter 2, and verse 5, here is an indictment in this chapter of Israel, and in verse 5, of Romans, chapter 2, that indictment against Israel is an indictment of their heart condition. "Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart" – I mean here were the Jews, who had all the law of God, and the covenants, and the promises, and the Messiah had come to them, and they had all of this. And they had all the external religion, they went through all the ceremonies, carried off all the sacrifices, gave all the offerings, went through all the external codes, did it all, but were stubborn and unrepentant in heart. And because of that, instead of storing up merit with God, verse 5 says they were storing up wrath. They were just accumulating more fuel for the fire in which they themselves would burn.

And the problem, down in verse 29, is further defined at the end of the chapter in these words: "He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and the circumcision that God's concerned about is the circumcision of the heart." Always it has been internal. The Jews, of course, had totally ignored that, and they had created an external religion. They had a form of godliness without any power. They had an external kind of religion. You remember that they had substituted the commandments of God with traditions.

Their religion was completely on the outside, and consequently they were storing up nothing but wrath. God's work is the work of the heart.

Over in Hebrews, chapter 4, it tells us what is most efficient in doing that work; verse 12, of chapter 4: "For the Word of God is alive, or living, and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." If you're going to do heart work, you don't want to use a butter knife. You're better off with a fairly sharp scalpel. And if you're going to do heart work spiritually, there's only one really efficient knife to use, and that's the Word of God, because it pierces all the way in to the division of soul and spirit. It is efficient all the way to the very place you need to go, all the way through the joints and the marrow, and it gets all the way down and dissects the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

If there's any question why we do what we do with the Word of God, that's the answer to it. If we're going to do heart work, we've got to use the one knife that can penetrate that deeply. We have to use the one efficient tool, and that's the Word of God. The Word of God is what cuts all the way down to the heart. It produces conviction. It tears up the thoughts and intentions, and unmask the reality of the condition. It cuts open and reveals the true state. In chapter 10 of Hebrews, and verse 22, it says if we're going to draw near God, we have to come with a sincere heart, a true heart, an honest heart without hypocrisy. And then following, it says, "Having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience."

You go in there, the Word of God slices open, takes you down to the heart, removes what is diseased, cleans the heart, and then you can draw near to God. Now, that's the metaphorical picture – what is the actual manifestation of a pure heart? Go back to Deuteronomy 10. When the surgery is done, and the patient has had the disease removed, the bypasses have been inserted, or whatever was done was done, they'll be a new kind of condition in that heart, and it's described for us in Deuteronomy 10. Deuteronomy 10:1: "For the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your" – what – "your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him."

Everything, really, that needs to be said about the whole of the Christian life is said in those two verses – it is a glorious summation. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, follow Him, fear Him, obey Him, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. That's it, and that all starts when you love Him with all your heart. The heart is the place. It has to come from inside. Over in Deuteronomy, chapter 10, and verse 1: "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants." He wants to go in and cut your heart, He wants to cut the disease out of your heart, He wants to cleanse, and purify, and purge your heart. Why? "To love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live."

That foundational reality of loving the Lord your God with all your heart is repeated in Matthew 22:37, in Mark 12:30, and 33, in Luke 10:27. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,” the New Testament says. It all starts with the heart, and so the internal systems give the church its life, and it starts on the inside and flows out. That’s why we’re not into legalism. We’re not interested in just herding you around in external conformity. But we want to see the Lord do heart work. Now, what are the essential heart attitudes? What are the essential heart motives and convictions? Last Sunday night I gave you the first one – faith – faith. And if you didn’t get to be here last Sunday night, you need to get that tape, because that is absolutely foundational to your understanding of this whole matter.

In Habakkuk 2:4, repeated in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38 – the Lord has repeated it all through Scripture – it says this: “The just shall live by faith.” At the heart of everything is believing God. “He that comes to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” And Paul, in Galatians 2, says, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” We live by faith. That is the compelling heart attitude. We walk not by sight, but by faith. And we trust God, and we believe God. We believe in Him, we believe Him to be the God revealed in Scripture. We believe He’s a God who faithfully keeps all of His promises and covenants. We believe He’s the God who knows best, and never lies, and tells us the truth.

Sin is what we do when we believe the flesh or the world or the devil, not when we believe God. So faith, then, becomes the shield that thwarts every temptation. God says, “Do right and you’ll be blessed, do right and you’ll prosper, do right and you’ll enjoy peace.” And when you believe God, you resist temptation. Faith is the important foundational attitude. Now, right alongside that – and we’ll talk about this one this morning – is obedience. The perfect companion to faith is obedience. In fact, the hymn says, “trust and obey – trust and obey.” It really sums up the two foundational attitudes. Obedience simply means to submit to what the Lord says, do what He tells you. And what He tells you is revealed in Scripture.

How foundational is it? Go back to the great commission, the last verse of Matthew, Matthew 28, verse 20. Jesus is commissioning His disciples to go out and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That’s the salvation part. You go out there, you preach the gospel. They believe. They become disciples. You take them and baptize them, public confession of their faith. And then verse 20, once they’re saved, here’s what you do: “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” That’s what we do. We teach people to obey God’s Word, to obey God’s commands, to submit to Him.

That is the foundation of Christian living, of sanctification, faith and obedience. And where you say there’s faith and there’s no obedience, we will question your faith. John 8:31, Jesus said, “Whoever continues in My Word is My real disciple.” Jesus said, “The one who keeps My commandments is the one who loves Me.” First John, John repeats this same emphasis in 1 John, chapter 2, “By this we

know we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has been truly perfected."

In other words, you say you love God, you say you believe in God, you say you belong to Him, then it will show up in your obedience. We're talking about heart obedience here, from the heart, obedience without equivocation, obedience without resistance, obedience without compromise. This is part and parcel of the original commitment we made. Turn to 1 Peter, and I want to show you a very important part of this first chapter in 1 Peter. First Peter 1:22 describes salvation as an act of obedience. It says, "You have in obedience to the truth purified your souls." He describes the same reality in verse 23, as having been born again through the Word of God. When you were born again through the Word of God, that also could be described as obeying the truth that purified your souls.

What truth was that? The gospel. What was the gospel? Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, right? And that's a command, so you either obey it or you don't. God said, "This is My Son, hear Him." Jesus said, "Repent, repent, repent." The apostles, remember the day of Pentecost, Peter says, "Repent, be baptized for the remission of sins," and so forth. Always they preach the gospel, "Believe, believe" – that's a command. It's always in a command mode and it calls for obedience, so Peter says, "You obeyed the truth and you were purified, you were saved." You were born again because you obeyed the truth – the truth contained in the Word of God. The Word of God was preached, you heard it, you believed it, you obeyed it.

It said, "Believe," you believed. It said, "Repent," you repented. It said "Cast yourself on Christ," you cast yourself on Christ. So the point is that, at the moment of salvation, you engaged in an act of obedience. But you did more than that. You pledged yourself, but that obedience was only the beginning, not some isolated event. In other words, at the time when you committed yourself to obey the gospel, you also affirmed Christ as Lord, right? You came, and you recognized that He was your Savior, and there was no other way to be saved from your sins, and you were on your way to hell, and the burden of your sin was overwhelming. And so you said, "I can't save myself, I can't deliver myself from sin, and only You can; You alone are the Savior, and please forgive my sin.

"I cast myself on Your mercy, I cast myself on Your grace. Please forgive my sin based upon the fact that You died in my place." And you recognized Jesus as Savior. But at the same time, you also acknowledged that He was Lord and Master, and you said, "I'll follow You – I'll follow You." I'm confident that no Christian at the time of salvation has a grasp on the full implications of what that commitment meant. You don't know what that means at that point, but the commitment is there. Why? Because the Holy Spirit has produced it. The Holy Spirit has produced the sense that you are now becoming a servant of God, and you are now becoming a servant of Jesus Christ your master, and acknowledging Him as your Lord. And you have stepped into a place of obedience.

That's part of the covenant of salvation. God's part: I save you, I forgive your sins, I give you eternal life through the work of Jesus Christ. Your part" you repent and you submit to follow Me. That's salvation. When you came to salvation, that's what you did – that's what you did, you committed to obedience, though you didn't fully understand all the implications involved in that. But go back to 1 Peter again, moving back from verses 22 to 23 to verse 1 and 2; this is a very, very important portion of Scripture. As Peter starts writing, at the end of verse 1 he starts to talk about this matter of salvation. He starts with election. He talks to the aliens, the scattered believers who are chosen.

So he's starting to talk about salvation here, and he starts with election. Back in eternity past, God chose who would be saved, and He did it, verse 2 says, according to His foreknowledge. Foreknowledge doesn't mean that everybody acts independently, and God way back looked ahead and saw what they were going to do, and said, "Oh, so that's what they're going to do; if that's what they're going to do, this is what I'll do." Foreknowledge is a predetermined relationship. "Fore" means before we were ever born, before we ever had a choice, before we ever did or didn't do anything, God predetermined to know us, in the same way that He says, "Israel only have I known." It doesn't mean that they're the only people on the planet that He knows, it means they're the only ones with whom He has personal relationship.

It's the same knowing as Cain knew his wife. It's the same knowing as Mary's pregnant and Joseph has never known her. It's the same knowing as in John 10, where "My sheep hear My voice and I know them." It is the knowing of intimacy. And God, in His plan, chose, based upon a predetermined relationship; He predetermined to have an intimate relationship with certain ones before the foundation of the world. That's the past part of salvation. The present part moves in in the phrase "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit." That which was in the decree of God in eternity past moved into time through the work of the Spirit; in what sense? We were sanctified by the work of the Spirit.

To put it another way, we were begotten of the Spirit; to borrow John 3, "Born of the Spirit." That's our salvation there. That's the initiation of the sanctifying work. Sanctify means to separate. When the Spirit separated us from sin, separated us from death, separated us from hell, separated us from Satan, in the sense that we were saved. So first eternity past, we are chosen based upon God's predetermination to have a relationship with us. We are saved, as the Spirit of God moved in and separated us unto God. That's the sanctifying work of the Spirit. It started at our salvation. And then notice this, next statement: "In order that." We were chosen and saved, "In order that you may" – do what – what's the next word – "obey Jesus Christ."

We were saved unto good works, Ephesians 2:10. We were saved unto obedience. That's the point. So the past, chosen on the basis of the foreknowledge of God; the present, saved by the separating work of the Spirit of God; the future, a life of what? Obedience. I mean that's the redeeming purpose, a life of obedience. And then, this most interesting little statement there: "and be sprinkled with His

blood.” That’s strange. What a strange thing to say. “And be sprinkled with His blood.” What does it mean to be sprinkled with His blood? Isn’t that more of a salvation issue? It’s referred to in Hebrews 12:24, “the sprinkled blood.” What is that? There is an answer to that, and it’s in Exodus 24, and that’s what Peter’s alluding to.

Go to Exodus 24; it is a very important text, and a very interesting one. In Exodus 24 – and we’re going to find out what that sprinkling of the blood is. In Exodus 24, Moses has been up on the mountain and received the law of God. God has given man His law. It includes the ten commandments and all the rest of the law that God gave, and in that law God has revealed His will in very specific terms. Obviously, prior to the Mosaic law, God had revealed His ways and His will in many different manners, but now it’s all going to be written down in absolute specifics in the law of Moses. So Moses went up the mountain, you remember, Mount Sinai, and was given the law of God. Then Moses came down. Let’s pick it up in chapter 24, verse 3.

“Moses came” – and all of this law, it’s this massive law, all of the law that came through Moses, ceremonial law, and moral law, and all the laws of social life, the whole thing. “Moses came, recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!” Now, this is a very important moment. Moses comes down, and I guess by the work of the Holy Spirit was able to remember everything, and he recounts the whole thing, all the law of God, to the people. And unilaterally, with one voice, they say, “We will do all of that.” And they make a public vow. They make a pledge, they make a promise, and it is a promise of obedience – it is a promise of obedience.

There’s a covenant being made here. God’s part of it is: I will send you My moral law, I will provide in that moral law My standards, I will provide in that moral law for when you violate those standards. Because in the Mosaic law – and it certainly has moral implications, spiritual implications – but in the Mosaic law, there was the sacrificial system, and they were instructed as to how to deal with their sin as well. So God even revealed His grace and His mercy through that law. So God says, “My part of the covenant is I’ll show you My will, and I’ll show you what I want you to do, and I’ll give you a path of righteousness, and I’ll give you a means of grace and mercy. And He gave all of that. And the people said, “And our part is we will obey.”

You have a parallel right there to salvation. At the point of salvation, God says to the sinner, “Here is My law, here is My means of grace; I will bless you, I will care for you.” And the believer says, “And I will” – what – “follow You, I’ll obey You.” So it’s a very similar scene. Follow along, then, in verse 4. “Moses” – after having recited all this, again, no doubt under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – “wrote down all the words of the Lord. And then he arose early in the morning” – the implication is that it was a full night of writing – “and he built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.” Now he’s going to get ready to publicly symbolize the covenant that has been made between God and the people.

God revealed His part, the people declared their part – God spoke, they spoke, and now he’s going to demonstrate a sealing symbol. So he builds this altar, out of stones, no doubt, and puts twelve stacks of stones representing the twelve tribes as a symbol of everybody’s participation. “He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord” – the sacrifices being an indication of the people’s pledge in response to God’s law. And then he did a most interesting thing in verse 6. He took half the blood – and believe me, burnt offerings, sacrificing young bulls, there was blood everywhere. It was a real blood bath as they were bleeding all of these animals, cutting the jugular, in most cases, and capturing all the blood.

“Moses took half the blood, put it in basins,” – collecting it all in these big basins – “and the other half of the blood he splattered across the altar” – the altar represented God. And so the covenant was going to be ratified in this sort of demonstrable way, and he splattered some of the blood across the altar. “Then he took the book of the covenant” – that is what he had written down all night – “and he read it in the hearing of the people” – he read it all over again. This would be the fact that they had heard it once, and now they hear it again. And all the people responded the same way: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be” – what – “obedient.” That’s the covenant made between the people and God. “So Moses,” verse 8, “took the blood and splattered it on the people.”

Some of the blood on the altar, symbolizing God’s part in the covenant; the rest of the blood on the people, symbolizing their part. “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” He said His part, you said your part, the blood is the physical demonstration that you’ve both made that commitment. Now with that in mind, go back to 1 Peter. And in 1 Peter 1, you read this: “That you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.” Peter is borrowing from that graphic, graphic ceremony of Exodus 24. And Peter is saying when you came to Christ, when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you accepted His part of the covenant: “I will write My law in your heart” – new covenant – “I will write My statutes in your heart. I will forgive all your trespasses and all your iniquities. I will grant you mercy and I will grant you grace.”

And at that part, at that point when you were receiving all of that from Him, you were responding by saying, “Yes, Lord, and I will follow You.” And that was the covenant of salvation. “I confess you as Lord,” and Lord means the one in charge, and that’s what you confessed. And at that point, in God’s eyes, the blood that had been splattered on Christ, the sacrifice, was then splattered on you, because of your part in the covenant. It’s a beautiful picture. So when you came to salvation, my friend, you made a simple covenant of obedience. The sad story of Israel is that they did – what – they violated it. And so do we – and so do we. If there’s anything that has to be the companion of faith, it must be obedience, because those two were the companions when we were saved, right? Faith in the Savior as the only one to save us; commitment to obey the Lord as our King.

Obedience, that from the heart, is what we desire in the church. Give me a church full of people whose hearts are devoted to obedience, and I'll show you a church with power and joy. Look at Romans 6:17 – I'm going to give you a few more and we'll be done. Romans 6:17 on this issue of obedience – but look at verse 16, first of all: "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey?" That's pretty obvious. If you become somebody's slave, the main word is obedience. When you present yourselves as a slave to somebody, the issue is you do what they tell you.

And then he makes that simple illustration, a spiritual doctrine, in verse 17: "Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart" – I love that phrase, you ought to underline it. "Obedient from the heart" – because it's your desire, because you love to be obedient, because it's from the inside – "You became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed." In fact, verse 18: "you became a slave of righteousness." When you came to Christ, you entered into a new obedience. You had been obedient before, to the flesh, the world, the devil. You had been obedient to sin. And now you're obedient to Him. You're obedient to righteousness.

It's not just a question of hearing the Word, it's a question of obeying it. In Matthew 7 there were people who heard the Word and didn't obey it, and they were building their house on sand. And when the judgment came it would collapse. Obedience means hearing and putting into practice. One last scripture, very important, James 1; we'll close with this one, James 1:22: "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." You know what happens if you hear the Word and don't apply it? You're living in a delusion; you are deceived about your true spiritual condition. If you're not applying the Word of God in your life you are deceived about your spiritual condition.

And then he gives an illustration of such deception – a very interesting one, verse 23: "If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror" – literally the word "looks" is "glances." You go in there in the morning, and you've decided you're going to shave off your mustache, and you get half of it shaved off, you've got half your hair combed and half your teeth brushed. And the phone rings, and you go out of there, and you've just barely gotten started, maybe, and you go out of there and you get on the phone, and you forget what you look like, and you go off to the office, to the hilarity of everybody who greets you, because you forgot what you look like.

So it is with an individual who merely glances at the Word of God, who doesn't apply it. He really doesn't understand the condition he's in. He thinks everything is fine, but everything is not fine; he is deceived about his true condition. And when he goes away, he forgets, because he doesn't apply. This certainly applies to a non-believer, a non-Christian who hears the gospel, hears the gospel, and never puts it into practice, never really looks very deeply at it, just water off a duck's back, and is

deceived about his true condition. This can be true about a person who comes to the church, makes a profession of Christ, might even in his own mind think he's a Christian, think he's a Christian – listens, never applies anything, never applies anything – he's in a state of delusion about his spiritual condition.

It can also be true of a Christian who hears teaching about a certain area, and he will not deal with that, he will not apply that in an area of his life. He becomes totally deceived about his true spiritual condition. So the point is this: you better take more than a passing glance if you want to know your true condition. And verse 25 says it: "The one who looks intently" – that's a Greek verb that means you look very closely and for a prolonged period to rightly assess your condition. You look in that mirror, which is the perfect law, the law of liberty. What's that? The Word of God, it's the perfect law, it's the law that sets you free from sin and delusion, and you abide by it.

You are not a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, "this man shall be blessed." It's obedience that brings the blessing. And people who don't obey are self-deluded. Maybe they're not even Christians. Maybe they're Christians who mistakenly think all is well when all is not well. So we want to deal with attitudes, from the heart. And that means faith, and that means obedience. Tonight we're going to talk about the third one. I'll tell you what it is – I shouldn't tell you, but I'm going to tell you – humility. And all of you who aren't here we know will be avoiding humility. This is a very important study tonight, and we'll only deal with it once. You be with us, and we'll have the Lord's table, as well. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You for again the reminder of the foundation of our Christian life being obedience. There is a plan. There's a right way to do things in your church, and that involves spiritual attitudes from the inside out. And, Lord, we ask that You would grant us great faith, and the strength to be obedient, and the longing to confess our disobedience and make it right. Work that work of conviction in our hearts that makes us hate our disobedience and long to submit. Produce in us those attitudes which will cause us to live in ways that bring You glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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