

Why Obedience?

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One of my favorite Alan Jackson songs is “Remember When”. I would sing that, but that would be the end of my sermon—they would jerk me off the podium here. Of course, being a country song, country music has to be about love, right? Some form of it is either falling in love, falling out of love or somewhere in between it—that’s country music. The point is, there’s a story in the song. Just speaking of remembrance, that’s what I’m leading into. As you get older, you reminisce more. Looking back at the early days in the church, I remember some of the stories. It was always interesting to me to hear the different stories of how people were called into the church. We were really new then. Everything was fresh to us and it was interesting how people came along. You don’t hear that anymore. Have you notice that? Now you ask, what group are you from? I know you’re one of the walking wounded but how many groups have you been in? For us, it’s been five.

When looking back and remembering, we all have these stories. Every once in a while, there’s one story that comes along and it’s unusual. It may be more colorful than the ones that you are used to hearing brethren tell. This one was back in the mid ’70’s as I recall. A gentleman came along who was a local businessman and who had his fingers in a couple of businesses. He was a property owner and was involved in local politics. I think at one point he was either running for a seat on the city council of Kennewick or mayor, I don’t remember which it was. What I do remember seeing, was his name and picture up on billboards. No internet back then, you couldn’t run endless ads on YouTube so they used billboards. The story goes that they started getting church literature—not sure how he did that. Back then in the church, the work they were doing was pretty well blanketing the airwaves, radio, TV, magazines and he got his hands on some of that. He got intrigued with it and he was interested in it. So, he decided he needed to be religious.

He went and joined a local Protestant church, thinking they were all the same. He didn’t know at that time that they weren’t. He was then baptized there. He has told this story in different ways over the years, but it was always pretty interesting. He asked the minister when he came up out of the water, what do I do now? Of course, the minister’s response was, nothing—your sins have already been forgiven, you’ve already been saved, go and do whatever you want to do. Nothing else is required. He knew enough to know that wasn’t right so then he further asked, what about all the commandments, what about all the things God tells us to do in scripture. The response again was, don’t worry about that, you don’t need to worry about that. You can’t keep all those pesky commandments anyway, all the 600 plus in the Old Testament, never mind what you’re told to do in the New Testament. Just go and live how you want, it doesn’t matter; God requires nothing else of you.

The long story short, he finally got some good counsel and he became a member of God's church. The point of the story is, he was told essentially that obedience to God was not required. I know all religions don't take that approach. Most religions will tell you, of course you have to keep the commandments and do what God says. We know that obedience is required of us. God expects it of all His children. Here is a good question to go along with that.

Why Obedience?

That's my title by the way. Sometimes when we answer that 'why' question we can pick up some things along the way. That is what I am trying to do with this message today. Let's see if we can break that 'why' question into some points. There are actually many, but I'm going to try and contain it in four or five points. I'll follow Rick's example.

The first point is:

1. Our obedience demonstrates our love for God and Christ.

- 1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.*
- 2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*
- 3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. [That's how we demonstrate it] And His commandments are not burdensome. (NKJV)*

Although some people think they are. Some people think they are not necessary or they can pick and choose which ones they want to keep. When we are baptized, we know we enter into a covenant agreement with God. That is, we tell God we will do what He says. So, in every sense, obedience becomes a living expression of our love towards God and that is how we demonstrate it. There are many more scriptures we could turn to on that point, but let's go on to the next point.

2. Obedience demonstrates our loyalty to God, not to men.

When you think about that, the definition of loyalty is pretty basic; faithfulness, steadfastness, allegiance, devotion, commitment, etc. Of course, we can have divided loyalties. We can have loyalties to our families, our friends, organizations, affiliations. We buy our cars from Toyota and we have a loyalty program, which just means we have an extended warranty. Loyalty per se, is not bad. I'm not saying that at all, but it can be misguided. Especially if it's used against you.

I have several books in my library on cults and they demand loyalty. You can think of Jim Jones, the branch Davidians, all of that; they demanded that. That is one way that can be abused. None of those things could ever supersede our loyalty to God. Scripture clearly tells us that. Notice the phrases in Deuteronomy 6:5 in the New King James.

Deuteronomy 6:5 *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.* (NKJV)

The *all* there in the context just means, “whole or totality of something”. Not in a casual or half-hearted way. Deuteronomy 11:1 continues the same thought.

Deuteronomy 11:1 *Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.* (NKJV)

We know from the New Testament, that very same scripture is repeated a couple of times, in Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10. In Luke’s account the context is that Jesus is being questioned. He was always being questioned and challenged. They were always after Him.

Luke 10:25 *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

This should be the most important question of all.

26) *He said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”*

He countered him with a question.

27) *So he answered and said, [quoting Deuteronomy 6:5] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. [He added one there from another place].*

28) *And He said to him [Christ answered him], You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”* (NKJV)

It cannot get any clearer than that, obedience is a prerequisite to eternal life. It’s what it says very plainly right there. Not that you can earn salvation; we can’t do that. Our obedience is a requirement, it’s our duty as God’s children. In fact, it’s our responsibility. Our obedience is also actually a part of our assurance that we know God and are truly loyal to Him. Look at 1John 2, in the New Living Translation. This is the so-called dynamic or thought for thought translation, and as long as they don’t drift too far away from that, it is a good enough translation.

1 John 2:1 *My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.* (NLT)

Want to set the example of how to do it? verse 2.

2) *He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.*

- 3) *And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments.*
- 4) *If someone claims ... (NLT)*

You know people make all kinds of claims. They usually don't prove anything. People say I'm the anointed one, or I'm God's Apostle or I'm the representative of God on earth, but it's just a claim. It does not legitimize anything if it doesn't square with God's word.

4 continued) ... *I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. (NLT)*

This is why Christ tells us very clearly to look at the fruits. In fact, we are told that in the Old Testament and we will look at that later.

5) *But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. (NLT)*

It's expressed by that; by the way we live, by who we are.

6) *Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (NLT)*

When you think about that, the way we live our lives, our behavior, our conduct, that is our new testimony to the world. Getting back to the point, where does that leave that misguided loyalty to men? I know most of the folks I'm looking at here have been around a long time and it's sorry to say we have all been there; when our loyalty was in the wrong place, was not focused on God and His word and we didn't catch it. It happens over time, it's conditioning.

When I thought about that, I remembered coming across a story, an account. I don't know if it's true or not, but it has a point. There was a foreign exchange student sitting in a class and, if I recall the story correctly, it is a political science class and they were discussing how people became conditioned to different ideas, different world views politically and this one student piped up—he was a foreign student—he asked the professor, do you know how you catch a wild pig? Of course, the academic had no idea how to do that. But where this young man came from, that was a practice. Maybe they had to do it to eat, I don't know. But it happens and he was drawing an analogy of how people are conditioned into different thinking. He said, what you do is find a place out in the woods, put some feed out and after a while the wild pigs will come to that food. They will get to a certain point where they expect that food. Then what you do is, you put out one side of the coral. As time goes on, they are not bothered by that side of the coral, so you put up another side and after a while, as you keep feeding them and they get used to it even more, you put up another one. Pretty soon you have the front up with the gate and you have trapped your wild pigs. The point I'm getting at is, that that is kind of what happened to us. We sat there for so long and we believed it. Christ said, if we are taken advantage of when we are babes, it's not going to be really good for whoever did that however it was done. In any case we can't excuse ourselves by that. We can't pass

the blame onto someone else or something else. God holds us responsible, doesn't He? Eventually we get there, and that's why we are sitting here today.

Scripture is pretty clear on that too. Go to Deuteronomy 13. For most of us, it was traumatic to pull away from that thinking. We came with a lot of baggage, to where we are now. Deuteronomy 13 from the New King James talks about some of this.

Deuteronomy 13:1 *If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder ... (NKJV)*

Back then, the prophets had dreams and visions, that was an acceptable thing. As far as I know, the word grandiose is not in the Hebrew, but a common definition comes to mind for grandiose. It says, characterized by excessive self-importance or effected grandeur; pompous. I'm not thinking of any particular individual in saying that, even though you may think that I am, but I'm not. Actually, there are several out there that are doing the same thing and if the way they are conducting themselves with God's people is accurate, you have to wonder, if it isn't a little nuts – verse 2.

2) and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them, (NKJV)

What Moses is doing is warning, so if a prophet or someone comes along that dreams or somebody with big ideas and it actually comes to pass, if it contradicts God's word, don't listen. That's what he's trying to say. Even if it does come to pass, don't be fooled by it. It is also talking about other gods that are leading you off into idolatry. Giving someone or something more importance than God.

3) you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you [testing your loyalty] to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

4) You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; [there it is again] you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. (NKJV)

I don't know if you have been counting the personal pronouns "you" and the "your", that's our responsibility. God holds us responsible for not listening when someone is trying to lead us astray.

5) But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. (NKJV)

If you read on, the context goes on with the same thing. The point I'm trying to make is the same thing can happen to a corporation. I'm not hammering this point again, but I retired from a corporation so I know how everything works; or most things. At some point a corporation can take on the persona of an entity and by subtle means begin to garnish your loyalty. That is what they demand. In fact, it can become a god in that sense.

Here's a quote from Ben Franklin, at least attributed to Ben Franklin but I understand he borrowed it from an Italian saying. "If we make ourselves sheep, the wolves will eat us." The point is that we can gradually get conditioned, and of course, Satan is right there in the mix helping that along—he loves that—and we can get drawn into focusing on something besides God and what He says and tells us to do. Then we start doing what someone else tells us to do or should be doing. If our loyalty becomes misguided, we can start having confidence in all the wrong things. We can start having confidence in numbers, the size of an organization and folks still worry about that. I don't really care about numbers; we've been there and done that. We have a scattered and battered church to prove it. I worry more about people's commitment really.

Whenever you concentrate that power—government, corporation, church—at some point, no matter how well intentioned the beginnings, by its own mass, a bureaucracy will be developed. That is just human nature. Power and money go to the head. It's kind of baked into the DNA of human beings. That's when the traditions, the things that troubled us all these years set in. A set way of doing things takes over people and they get caught up in that momentum. It carries us along, like we are on the crest of a wave. Then what happens? When you try to challenge those ideas and rules, you get run over by the sheer bureaucratic inertia.

I have another story along those lines—traditions. I don't know whether this story is true or not. A group of behavioral scientists did an experiment with some monkeys. They put five monkeys in a room and put a step ladder in there with a bunch of bananas on top. Of course, monkeys being hungry, wanted to eat. One of them would try to go up and get the bananas while the rest of them would get hosed down with cold water. Pretty soon, every time a monkey would try to go up that ladder, the rest of them would get hosed down and they started to beat up the other monkey that tried to go up the ladder. That went on for quite a while. Then the scientists decided to take one of the monkeys out and put in a new one. The first thing he did was head up the ladder to get the bananas and the other monkeys beat him up. After several beatings, he learned not to go up the ladder too. He didn't know why, but he didn't want to go up there. That process was repeated four more times. So, at the end there were five monkeys left which had never been up the ladder, they had never received the cold-water treatment but they didn't go up the ladder. If any of them tried, they were beaten up. If you could ask the monkeys what was going on and why they didn't go up the ladder, they wouldn't know why. But I bet the answer would be, we don't know why, it's just the way things are always done here. That may or may not sound familiar. But that's what happens with tradition.

We have the perfect record that was touched on in the sermonette of Christ in the Gospels where he bucked the establishment, the religious order of His day. Maybe we'll hear a little more about that during the days of Unleavened Bread. Buck the system and you'll get run over every time. Even persecuted much of the time; that just happens. We've all lived through this controversy the last few years, the God of the Old Testament and it's like kicking over a hornet's nest. That's what it was in the beginning. I found a quote that kind of describes that. "Whenever you see persecution, there is more than a probability that truth is on the persecuted side." There's some truth there. That's a quote from Hugh Latimer, you probably remember him. Maybe you don't, he was an English martyr, 1487 to 1555—that's 465 years ago. He was an Anglican bishop of Worcester before the reformation. His life ended in 1555 because Catholic Queen Mary had him burned at the stake along with one of his other ministers. When you stand up for the truth, nothing much ever changes—nothing new under the sun as Solomon said.

That brings us to the third point.

3. Obedience demonstrates our commitment to God.

Luke 14, this is the famous cost of discipleship chapter.

Luke 14:12 *Then He also said to him who invited Him, When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. (NKJV)*

Sounds like quid pro quo. We're so familiar with that because of this toxic, political environment that we're living in and suffering through right now. The idea of people doing something because there is something in it for them. We can see that in the context if we back up to verse 1 of Luke 14. I'll use the Amplified for this verse.

Luke 14:1 *It occurred one Sabbath, when [Jesus] went for a meal at the house of one of the ruling Pharisees [probably other elites of that particular religious organization were there too], that they were [engaged in] watching Him [closely]. (AMP)*

It was a set up; a typical set up. Of course, He knew perfectly well what they were trying to do and He beat them to the punch by healing a man that was also invited to the dinner. That individual was a plant obviously. Go to verse 6, back to the New King James.

6) And they could not answer Him regarding these things. (NKJV)

He stopped them cold in what they were trying to do. He took advantage of that dinner setting and launched into a couple of parables. The parable of the Wedding Feast and the parable of the banquet. Drop down to verse 13 of Luke 14, continuing in the New King James version.

13) *But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.* (NKJV)

People that can't do anything for you, which it says in the next verse.

14) *And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

15) *Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*

16) *Then He said to him, A certain man gave a great supper and invited many ...* (NKJV)

He begins to use His parable to speak about the Kingdom of God.

17) *and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, Come, for all things are now ready.*

18) *But they all with one accord began to make excuses.* (NKJV)

Those excuses are verses 19 through 20. The first excuse was from an individual who had property which needed attention—maybe bought a new condo somewhere, nice place and wanted to enjoy that for a while. Then the next one was a farmer who had bought a brand-new John Deere tractor and wanted to try that out. No, actually he bought some oxen and he wanted to try the oxen to test them. Verse 21, continuing.

21) *So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.*

22) *And the servant said, Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.* (NKJV)

Kind of foreboding there; sounds like a lot of vacancies at this supper. We know what it's representing.

23) *Then the master said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.* (NKJV)

It was not in God's plan to have a lot of vacancies at that supper.

24) *For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.* (NKJV)

Then it begins the section, the cost of discipleship in verse 25.

25) *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,*

26) *If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.* (NKJV)

There is a cost.

27) *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

28) *For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—* (NKJV)

Talking about commitment here, verse 29.

29) *lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, [make fun of him; started something and can't finish it.]*

30) *saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish ?*

31) *Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?*

32) *Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.*

33) *So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.* (NKJV)

Verse 34 and 35 He talks about a symbol.

34) *Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?* (NKJV)

Remember those symbols, we'll touch on them later.

35) *It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* (NKJV)

It means that those who hear this understand that He's talking about commitment. If you ask yourself why Jesus uses such strong terms there, it is in the context that he understood human nature in regard to religion. Nothing much ever changes. People want their version of religion and Christianity today. Remember what Paul told Timothy. Just a reference scripture, 2 Timothy 3:5, he says they will act religious but they will reject the power that can make them Godly—stay away from people like that. The point is, people want a religion, they want to be religious but they don't want any rules. They don't want those pesky commandments to keep; they want to do whatever they want morally, situation ethics, no cost, no sacrifice, just easy religion. That's what people want. Maybe they could make a country song about that.

Sometimes, looking at this whole religious landscape out there where people look at religion like a spectator sport. Best to just sit on the sidelines and cheer on your favorite religious order, your favorite charismatic leader, whoever you agree with or whoever agrees with your world vision and just be a pseudo-Christian. This whole concept of obedience is not complicated. It's just doing what God says in His word but people just don't want to do that. That would mean not picking and choosing what we want to obey and do, but everything we come to understand individually—just like Christ was talking about. Those that wanted to follow Him and enter into that Christian walk and start down that path had to be committed to that way of life. That's a process all of us who have been around have gone through. It takes more than a day or two. It takes a life time of actually of growing. As we grow spiritually, our commitment develops along the way and becomes stronger and stronger. It's stronger than when we began. I think most of us can say that.

Here's another reference scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:17, New King James version. In the context, it is talking about God reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (NKJV)*

That's not an instant creation—that's a process. Another thing to point out about obedience is to make sure you are obeying for the right reason. It's not your righteousness, it's not for your honor and glory but for that of God and Christ. We don't want to be like the Pharisees with their self-righteous approach to worshiping God. They made up their own rules as they went along. In fact, they invented a whole host of other rules to make themselves more religious, with the idea that God has to recognize that. We can't do that. We can't operate like that. I've known people in the church who have bragged about their righteousness. Bragged about how much money they gave to the church, how they did this or that. You remember the motive of the Pharisees; their motive was quantity, not quality.

Another part is that the commitment to truth is vital. It's part of that point, not a separate point. When you think about the whole world of religion, almost none of it is based on truth. Maybe a little bit here or there. I ran across an article recently that said, Is Jesus Jehovah? It was completely wrong—completely—and they used a ton of scriptures. Same arguments plus everything they could come up with. People do that. They'll have a doctrine and they'll have a great scholar and embellish it. Their ideas are well articulated and well put together, but all the scholarship, doesn't make something true. If it's false, it is still false at the end of all that. This article was terrible because the whole thing was in support of a triune God—that was the whole article. I didn't bother to look up all the scriptures that they had—they were endless—it was their argument to overwhelm you. People are taken in by that and follow men in the process. The point is, God wants us to obey His truth, wherever that may lead. There's no options to that—none. You have to be committed all the way.

Another thing under this point—same point—God requires commitment to obedience in the good times and the bad. You can't just turn it on and off when things are a little bit tough. We get in a spiritual survival mode, but we don't stop obeying God in that, just because we are going through something particularly bad. God tells in Hebrews 11; you probably know where I'm headed—that He is looking for people who will obey Him and stick with Him, no matter what comes their way. But that commitment will not waiver. Yes, sometimes it may get a little shaky but it talks about that here. Obviously, we're not going to read the whole chapter, but go down to the concluding verses, beginning in verse 36 through 40. He is speaking of all the previous accounts which he has gone through. I'll use the New Living Translation.

Hebrews 11:36 *Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons.*

37) *Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated.*

38) *They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.*

39) *All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised.*

40) *For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us. (NLT)*

It is going to count in the end. No matter what we had to do to get there. The last part of this commitment point is obedience is measurable. One of those measurements is commitment. What I mean by that is, when we were baptized and the minister dunked us under the water and we came up and the minister looked us in the eye and asked us if we were really committed to following Jesus Christ and fully acknowledging Him as Savior. (That's the way it should be done.) We said yes, we would follow Him; at least I hope that's what we said. We meant it, hopefully with all of our heart at that point. Then what happened? Life came along. Our own human nature, with Satan thrown in, begins to erode that commitment. It rises and falls like a wave graph or a wave curve. Unfortunately, our obedience tends to do the same thing; as our commitment goes, so does our obedience. I don't know whether you've ever noticed that or not. Everything we just mentioned gets in the way and in a subtle way we tend to compromise our values, depending on how bad we're hurting.

Just like it says here at the end of Hebrews 11, at the end of our lives, that original commitment is still there and God knows that. We just read that in Hebrews and that was the point. To me, that's what is amazing about the God of the Old Testament—the great controversy. To me, what's really in question is the commitment of God's people to Him and Him alone; when you think about that. Can you believe one thing one place about God and then look at another place and believe something else? You cannot do that. It seems to me that there are far too many things getting in the way of people accepting the real God of the Old Testament—there's just too many things in the way. I was talking to Rick about this recently. If you look on this whole thing as an evidentiary

scale, when you consider all the actual undeniable scriptural evidence—6521 places of LORD, of Jehovah, in the Old Testament and then you throw in that 2000 Elohim's, you're looking at something in the vicinity of 8000 pieces of evidence in all the references. In a court of law, the evidentiary scale would be the burden of truth. That would fall on us. The proof of God of the Old Testament is right there in the Bible. If you measure on a scale of one through ten, all those references are a ten plus—they really are. That's the gold standard of the truth of God's word and who the God of the Old Testament was. I challenge anyone—Bible scholar or what—to come up with 8000 proofs to the contrary. You can't do it. The best arguments in the world are not even going to touch that.

That brings us to point number 4.

4. Obedience glorifies God.

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and [that's doing what God says] glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

Those good works just mean you obey God in every aspect of your life and it's visible—in some way it's visible. It's the way you conduct your life, it's evident in your behaviors. It needs a little bit of context to make that even more clear - go back up to verse 13.

13) *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. [Worthless]*

14) *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

15) *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. (NKJV)*

Two symbols there—they are actually pretty simple when you look at it. Salt was mentioned earlier in Luke 14. It's really simple, these are simple scriptures. Salt is just sodium chloride but it permeates anything it touches. It adds flavor, some zest, it can be used as a persevering agent, all that; we've heard all that before. A light is electromagnetic radiation. You didn't know you were being radiated even in here. It has frequencies, wavelengths and it makes visible to the human eye whatever it touches, whatever it reaches. Both of those have an effect on whatever they do touch. The point is those are the characteristics that God wants us to have. Our conduct, our behaviors, those things that are visible, that reflects God's influence on our lives—the way we do things. Read verse 16 again.

16) *Let your light so shine ... (NKJV)*

This is the whole point at this stage in the so-called Beatitudes.

16 continued) *... before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

Because you're doing what God says. When you think about it, that should happen without any conscious effort on our part. It should just be what people see in us. I have a little story about myself. I usually don't have many good examples about myself, but I'll tell this one. I retired from a power plant—it was a nuclear facility. We made electricity, not bombs. The company that I worked for at the time, had a small power plant in Packwood, Washington in a little town there, on the west side of the Cascades. We would go over once a year and do annual maintenance on that little plant. They had a small turbine that we would use to pull water from Packwood Lake up into the mountains. Pretty neat little place, a quaint town to visit and not really a tourist trap but almost everyone coming off White Pass goes through there.

Of course, we had per diem, we would stay at a motel, eat in town—they had a couple good restaurants, good wholesome food. Wednesday night was taco night at the local tavern. If I recall right, you could buy two or three tacos for a dollar. There's your dinner for that night. We would go down and I would have one beer and tacos. To while away the time in there, one of my buddies, one of the guys I had worked with for a number of years and I were shooting pool. If I recall, I ran the table on him a couple of times. We were playing eight ball. He looked at me and said, Jack you haven't always been a Christian, have you? I honestly don't really know how he knew that, because I don't really talk religion. I don't try to convert people. What you see is what you get. But I thought it was neat. He had probably noticed, after working with him for several years, that I didn't work certain days, maybe I didn't use the same kind of language as everybody else, although I slipped up once in a while.

Here a while back I smashed my finger in the door and it turned black instantly and I said, chihuahua, chihuahua. I told that story once and My wife said that's not what he said.

Every place I have worked in, I always took a vacation at the same time of year. We went to some pretty neat places for a while. People would ask me, where did you go this year Jack? That's probably how he knew. The point is, no matter who we are or where we are in life, if you love God and obey God, it's reflected in who you are and what you do. It matters to God and you are glorifying God and Jesus Christ in the process. Even though sometimes it might draw persecution. People are around to see that as well. They will remember that someday, just us living the way God calls us to, obeying God, doing the things we should be doing. God sets a standard in our lives and that's the way we conduct our lives. It is not loud, but in a way, it is our mute testimony to the world of who we are.

Number five, last point.

5. Obedience brings blessings.

Psalm 128 comes to mind, verse 1. I like the Amplified in some of these.

Psalm 128:1 *Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is everyone who fears, reveres, and worships the Lord [Jehovah], who walks in His ways and lives according to His commandments. (AMP)*

Pretty simple prescription. Actually, they give a reference to Psalm 1:1, again from the Amplified, it brings it out a little bit more.

Psalm 1:1 *Blessed (happy, fortunate, prosperous, and enviable) is the man who walks and lives not in the counsel of the ungodly [following their advice, their plans and purposes], nor stands [submissive and inactive] in the path where sinners walk, nor sits down [to relax and rest] where the scornful [and the mockers] gather. (AMP)*

The whole point of what is being said here is that there is a sharp contrast when someone conducts their life by God's standards and not by the world's. I think it's getting worse all the time when you think about that. We know that Psalm 119 is about God's law. Doing what God says and living God's way of life brings blessings. It doesn't mean it's a free ride, it just means that overall, it brings blessings. When you think about it, and we can attest to this—my wife and I—what we would normally call a severe trial turns out to be a blessing. God is there all the time. We're the ones that waver all over the place.

Psalm 119:1 *Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are the undefiled (the upright, truly sincere, and blameless) in the way [of the revealed will of God], who walk (order their conduct and conversation) in the law of the Lord (the whole of God's revealed will).*

2) *Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are they who keep His testimonies [I looked that word up—keep—it's used several places, it just means "do it"], and who seek, inquire for and of Him and crave Him with the whole heart. (AMP)*

Who can neglect Deuteronomy 28? The title for this chapter is usually Blessings and Curses. It's also known as the blessings for obedience and the consequences for disobediences. It's what the whole chapter is about. I'll read several verses, not the whole thing. It takes us back to the question, why obedience? The whole context of the chapter is that obeying God brings blessings at some point and in some way or another it brings blessings. It's spelled out right here. Moses is very concerned about all these people. He has maybe a few million people and he is pretty concerned about them. How do they conduct themselves, as they go into the land that God promised and he's not going to get to go? This is pretty important to them. He is telling them basically everything they have heard up to this point. He is repeating it for emphasis. I'm using the Literal version. I have Young's Literal and this one is Green's. I don't like the Young's too much because it's all laced with old King James English. Green's makes it pretty plain. What I really like about Green's is that they translate LORD, Jehovah, correctly. When you think about LORD and you realize the ambiguity that one single word has caused by the way it has been interpreted.

Deuteronomy 28:1 *It shall be, if listening you will listen to the voice of Jehovah your God, taking heed to do all His commandments that I command you this day, Jehovah your God shall give you to be on high above all nations of the earth, 2) and all these blessings will come on you and overtake you if you listen. (GLT)*

There's a key—listen to what God says.

- 2 continued) ... *to the voice of Jehovah your God,*
- 3) *you shall be blessed in the city and you shall be blessed in the field.*
- 4) *the fruit of your body shall be blessed and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your livestock, the offspring of your oxen and the young ones of your flock,*
- 5) *your basket and your kneading-trough shall be blessed.*
- 6) *You shall be blessed when you come in and when you go out.*
- 7) *Jehovah shall cause all your enemies that rise up against you to be stricken before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven other ways.*
- 8) *Jehovah shall command a blessing on you and your storehouses and all that you set your hand to do and he shall bless you in the land which Jehovah your God is giving you.*
- 9) *Jehovah shall establish you a holy people to Himself as He has sworn to you if you shall keep the commands of Jehovah your God and welcome His ways [not count them as a burden].*
- 10) *All the people of the world shall see you ... (GLT)*

There's that salt and light, even in the Old Testament in a way, if you want to look at that.

10 continued) ... *all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of Jehovah. (GLT)*

In other words what they did, the example they set in their lives all mattered to God. It mattered then and it matters now.

- 10 continued) ... *and they shall fear you.*
- 11) *And Jehovah shall prosper you in goods and in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give to you. (GLT)*

Physical land then, spiritual place in the future, all for obedience.

- 12) *Jehovah shall open to you His good treasure, the heavens to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand, you shall lend to many nations but you shall not borrow.*
- 13) *And Jehovah shall make you the head and not the tail and you shall be only above and shall not beneath again if you heed the commandments of Jehovah your God which I am commanding you today to be careful to do them. (GLT)*

Careful as opposed to carelessly.

14) And you shall turn not away from all the words which I am commanding you today, right or left, to go after other gods to serve them and it shall be if you will not heed the voice of your God, to take heed to do all His commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today, even all these curses shall come on you and overtake you. (GLT)

Cause and effect, we've heard that before. When you talk about the effect for disobedience, that is the consequence, we always try to rationalize that away. All these problems I'm having couldn't be me and what I'm doing. Verse 16 starts the curses. I won't read through all of this.

16) You shall be cursed in the city, cursed in the field ... (GLT)

Your basket and kneading-trough—that's cursed. The fruit of your body, offspring of your oxen, young ones of your sheep, cursed when you go in and when you go out. Verse 20.

20) Jehovah shall send cursing on you, trouble and rebuke and all that you set your hand; all which you will do until you are destroyed or until you quickly perish because of the badness of your doings which you have forsaken me. (GLT)

Can you see any connections on a national level?

21) Jehovah shall make the plague cling to you until it has consumed you from off the land where you are going to possess it.

22) Jehovah shall strike you with lung disease and with a fever and with an inflammation and with the extreme burning and with a sword and with blasting and mildew and they shall pursue you until you perish. (GLT)

It goes on with many of the things that God did bring on the nation of Israel. There is a connection, there is a correlation there if you read into that. Verse 45.

45) And all these curses shall come on you and pursue you until you are destroyed for you did not heed the voice of Jehovah your God to keep His commandments and statutes which He commanded you. (GLT)

Moses is just conveying them. Verse 58.

58) If you will not take heed to do all the words of this law, written in this book to fear this glorious and fearful name Jehovah your God ... (GLT)

Then it goes on to say other curses that God will bring—the plague, all the diseases, every sickness of Egypt. Verse 62.

62) *and you shall be left few in number whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, because you would not obey the voice of Jehovah your God. (GLT)*

You could draw a lot of similarities between ancient Israel, their disobedience and what can happen to any nation as we push God more and more out of the picture. You might even see some similarities—some of these bad things—in the church. When we think about things like just deciding for ourselves what God’s word is telling us. Enough said on that.

Just as a reference, remember what Solomon said in all of his wisdom. Everything that he had, untold riches, anything that he wanted, he had. The way he concluded the last part of Ecclesiastes, just as a reference, Ecclesiastes 12:13 and 14 from the New Living.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 *That s the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone s duty. [Certainly ours] 14) God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. (NLT) Finally in Revelation 22:8-14*

Revelation 22:8 *Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.*

9) *Then he said to me, See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”*

10) *And he said to me, Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.*

11) *He who is unjust [disobedient], let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”*

12) *And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. [Judgement time]*

13) *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

14) *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. (NKJV)*

So, what is the answer to the question, why obedience? The things we have covered are just a handful of things. Why obedience? It shows God and Christ our love for them, our loyalty to them alone, our commitment to them alone and nothing else. Our obedience glorifies them and it brings blessings. Contrary to folks who say that we de-emphasize Christ and emphasize the Father—well, that’s a bunch of nonsense. All we do is present the Father and the Son the same way they are presented in scripture—not complicated. There are many more reasons that could be added to these. You could maybe come up with some more for your study and meditation.