

Why Do We Obey Our Heavenly Father?

Mark Sapptington
Recorded on August 4, 2020

Brethren, many of the members of the church of God have been attending services for over twenty years. Many of us have been attending for over thirty years. Many of us have been attending for over forty years and some of us have been attending over fifty years, keeping God's way of life.

I would like to begin my sermon by asking all of us a few questions.

Why do we keep the Sabbath? Why do we keep the Holy Days? Why do we tithe? Why do we pray? Why do we study? Why do we fast? Why do we do what we do? In short, why do we obey our Heavenly Father? Why do we follow His laws, instructions, precepts and teachings? What motivates us to obey the Father and to imitate His Son, Jesus Christ, to the best of our abilities?

The answer to these questions goes to the heart and core of our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and our relationship with one another. The answers to these questions have also changed over time. On an individual level, as we have grown and matured spiritually, on a collective basis, and as the Church as a whole grows and matures spiritually.

There are many reasons why we obey God the Father. Some are great reasons, and some are not really good reasons at all. There are four options that we can choose from in answering why we do what we do and the motivation behind why we do the things we do.

Option 1 is that we can do the right action for the right reason.

Option 2 is we can do the right action for the wrong reason.

Option 3 we can do the wrong action for the right reason.

Option 4 we can do the wrong action for the wrong reason.

These four options can be demonstrated in the following situation between a young man, and an elderly woman standing at the intersection of two very busy streets.

An example of a right action for the right reason would be that the young man seeing the elderly lady looking a little scared, hesitate and unsure of herself and truly needing assistance getting across the street. Doing the right action for the right reason would be the young man helping the elderly lady across the street. He helped the lady because he saw a need. Doing the right action for the right reason is a blessing.

An example of a right action for the wrong reason would be the young man helping the elderly lady across the street because he expects that in the end, she will give him a either a tip or money or that he will impress his friends or someone else—onlookers.

Doing the right action for the wrong reason does not have the correct motivation behind the action. Doing the right action for the wrong reason is pride or greed.

An example of a wrong action for the right reason would be the young man, seeing the need of the elderly lady and helping her across the street, only to find that she didn't want to cross the street. The heart is in the right place, but the outcome is not correct. Doing the wrong action for the right reason is a mistake.

An example of a wrong action for the wrong reason would be the young man dragging the elderly lady across the street against her will, even when he knew that she didn't want to cross the street. The motivation behind the action was wrong, the action was wrong, and the outcome was wrong. Doing the wrong action for the wrong reason is sin.

Our obedience to the Father is always the right action, so it always falls within the first two options. The choice of the option depends on our motivation and on our spiritual maturity. Brethren, why do we obey God the Father? What is our motivation for obeying Him and His commandments? What is our motivation for doing good deeds? Why do we follow His commandments? Why do we show love for one another? In my sermon this afternoon entitled:

Why Do We Obey Our Heavenly Father?

I would like to explore the subject of why we obey the Father and His laws and His commandments, and to discuss the path to spiritual maturity in our obedience to the God the Father and our imitation of Jesus Christ. This path will take us from obeying God for the wrong reasons to obeying Him for the right reasons.

To preface the discussion of this path, I want to emphasize that obedience to God is always a good thing—it is always good, even if we our motivations are wrong, even if we obey begrudgingly, even if we obey in ignorance. Obedience to God is always good, because disobedience is always sin. However, our motivation for obedience changes as we mature spiritually on our path to the Kingdom. And on this path toward spiritual maturity, I would like to discuss 6 levels in that maturing process of our obedience to God the Father.

The first level in the maturing process of our obedience to our Heavenly Father is:

1. Level 1 — Obeying God the Father in order to avoid punishment.

This represents the lowest level of why we obey God. This is the least mature level and is the level where many begin their journey and their relationship with our Father.

Many of us here are parents. Especially with very young, small children obedience comes in order to avoid punishment. Children are told not to do something, and when

they disobey and do it anyway, then they are either spanked or punished in some way, immediately. Children learn very quickly that disobedience brings immediate pain. So, in the beginning, without extensive cognitive processes going on in their little brains, children equate disobedience with punishment, and they equate obedience as a way to avoid punishment, pain and unpleasantness. At that age and level of cognitive ability, reasoning with a two-year old does not work in the same way that reasoning with a teenager or an adult would.

For Christians, obeying God to avoid punishment is missing the whole point of obedience. It is a question of attitude. A physical example which would show the difference in this attitude concerns speeding through school zones. Why do we not speed through? Is it because traffic fines for speeding are doubled in a school zone? Or is it because we want to drive carefully through a school zone so we don't hurt a child? It is a question of attitude. Avoiding punishment tells us to be careful driving through a school zone so that we avoid getting a ticket from the police and have to pay the penalty of a fine. Love tells us to be careful going through a school zone so we don't hurt an innocent child.

Likewise, decades ago, I believe that many in the Church of God observed the Sabbath, went to the Feast, tithed, studied, prayed, fellowshiped, and obeyed in order that they would avoid the Great Tribulation by going to the Place of Safety. Or, among many other reasons, so they would avoid the Third Resurrection and the Lake of Fire. A common thread in all of these reasons in the past was the fear of punishment. There was no lasting depth of conviction with many brethren who were once among us. When their fear of punishment disappeared, so did they. They stopped obeying God and stopped their continuance in living God's way of life.

In 1 John 4:17 the Apostle John addresses this fear of punishment among believers and shows how that fear comes from our inexperience and our immaturity in growing our relationship with the Father. 1 John 4:17 in the New Living Translation.

1 John 4:17 *And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So, we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.*

18) *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

19) *We love each other because he loved us first. (NLT)*

So, it is the fear of punishment that is the chief motivator. In Genesis 4:8 we read a story about Cain that we know very well. Cain became jealous of his brother Abel because God honored Abel's sacrifice and was not with Cain's sacrifice. And this jealousy led to disaster.

Genesis 4:8 *And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

- 9) *And the LORD said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*
- 10) *And he said, what hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground.*
- 11) *And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;*
- 12) *When you till the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*
- 13) *And Cain said unto the LORD, my punishment is greater than I can bear.*
- 14) *Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that finds me shall slay me. (KJV)*

Cain killed his brother, Abel, in a fit of jealous rage. His relationship with God was centered on a fear of punishment. There was no remorse here, there was no repentance, it was all about him. He was feeling sorry for himself because of what he was going to have to endure. There was no reconciliation with Yehovah. In fact, apparently there had not been much obedience to God to begin with all along; his heart was not right.

In 2 Corinthians 7:9 Paul had sent a rather scolding letter in his first Epistle to the congregation in Corinth, concerning the grievous sin that they were allowing in the congregation. The congregation as a whole repented, they changed, and they obeyed Paul's commands to change and correct the situation.

In his second epistle of 2 Corinthians, he reflected back on their obedient attitude, and he addressed two types of sorrow.

- 2 Corinthians 7:9** *Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.*
- 10) *For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world works death. (KJV)*

Obedience out of a sincere desire to obey leads to salvation. But obedience out of fear of punishment does not lead to repentance, and with time, obedience out of fear of punishment will lead to death.

We, as Christians, may begin here in Level 1, but we must not stay at this level, or we will not and cannot, deepen our relationship with God the Father. We will not continue on the long run of this way of life and will ultimately not be in God's Kingdom. At this level, we are doing the right actions for the wrong reasons.

The next level in the maturing process of our obedience to our Heavenly Father is:

2. Level 2 — Obeying God the Father in order to meet a forced requirement.

As children grow a little older, they begin to adjust to being more cognizant of their surroundings and of the rules and regulations that are governing their lives. They begin to realize the “fences” and “boundaries” that are placed in their lives. These are boundaries which are not to be crossed.

Children, at this point, may feel that all these rules that are governing everything are being forced on them. There are new rules and regulations at school. New rules and regulations at all the activities they are involved in, in sports events, in music classes, in so many new areas of their lives. Children need these fences and boundaries at this point in their lives. In fact, many psychologists believe that these fences and boundaries in their lives actually help them thrive. They make them feel safe and become better adjusted in their societal environment.

The same is true with mankind when it comes to obeying God. The Bible contains a litany of stories about the fences and boundaries that God the Father had placed on people. A special nation that had many boundaries set upon them and even forced upon them, was Ancient Israel.

God the Father established many laws in Exodus and Leviticus for Ancient Israel which governed many aspects of their lives. He gave them the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. He deeply desired that the Israelites would obey Him with a willing heart, but the unconverted and unrepentant Israelites never truly did.

Deuteronomy 5:29 *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear [or revere] me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! (KJV)*

But the Israelites never had the heart and the desire to obey God. For the Israelites, obedience to God was out of a forced requirement. They were captives, they had nowhere else to go. They were in the wilderness for forty years being fed Manna by the Father in order to keep them alive. They had nowhere else to go.

That attitude resurfaced hundreds of years later in the time of Jesus. In Matt 23:23 we read about the hypocritical attitude, intent and motivation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Christ was very, very upset at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes and this is very evident in these verses.

Matthew 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

24) *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

25) *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*

26) *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

27) *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

28) *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (KJV)*

The Pharisees were masters at implementing forced requirements on the people. They created laws—repressive laws—which governed every specific and detailed aspect of life. There was no room for intent, only strict physical requirements forced upon the Jewish populace. Yes, the Pharisees obeyed God the Father, but they obeyed in a twisted, unrighteous way which valued pretense and appearance over substance and compliance. They valued compliance over intent.

In Matthew 23:13, just a few verses before. Jesus scolded the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocritical requirements which they had forced upon their people. Jesus did not hold back in His condemnation of that attitude.

Matthew 23:13 *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

14) *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore, ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

15) *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (KJV)*

Obeying God the Father because of forced requirements is not from the heart. In the end, it is not pleasing to our Father because it is not from the heart. At this level, obedience comes from an external force.

In the history of the Church of God, many members obeyed God through all the rules and regulations of the Church because of a forced requirement. Many decades ago, there was no other alternative. There was no other place to go. So, members were biding their time, obeying out of forced requirement. Then the moment that they were told that they no longer had to obey, they quickly stopped obeying God's laws and precepts. When the external force was lifted, there was no internal desire to keep God's law. Again, this level represents an immature approach to our relationship with the Father, and to our obedience to Him. Therefore, we cannot stay at this level in our obedience to Him. At this level, we are doing the right actions but for the wrong reasons.

The next level in the maturing process of our obedience to our Heavenly Father is level three.

3. Level 3 — Obeying God the Father in order to get something.

As children grow older, they quickly realize that they can get “stuff” if they obey parents. They find that their parents are very willing to reward their obedience.

So, in their young minds, there is a cause and effect. Although this cause and effect is much more positive than the fear of punishment or a forced obedience against their will, the underlying attitude at the basis of this process is still not the proper attitude for obedience. Although many parents may not immediately see the true motivation of a child’s pristine obedience to them, our Heavenly Father sees all and knows all.

We see, just like older children, we should not obey God just because we want to receive something. We should not obey God just because we want to receive blessings or something else in life, even eternal life. That, in essence, is quid pro quo. We obey God in order to get something; that is quid pro quo.

Getting something from God cannot be the chief motivator in our obedience to Him and His laws, because once we receive what we want, then what? Even if we receive eternal life, then what? In Matthew 19:16, we read an account of a young rich man who came to ask Christ what he needed to do in order to receive or get eternal life. Jesus saw through the underlying attitude behind his question.

Matthew 19:16 *And, behold, one came and said unto Jesus, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

17) *And he said unto him, Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

18) *He says unto him, Which? Jesus said, thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness,*

19) *Honor thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

20) *The young man says unto him, all these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

21) *Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

22) *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (KJV)*

The young man wanted to get eternal life as a quid pro quo; I do this and do this and in return, I get eternal life. But his heart was not in the right place. Apparently, he was obeying the commandments, but his sole focus was on getting something from God. And when he found that the price was too great, he went away and did not follow the Messiah. Brethren, do we find ourselves doing the exact same thing? Do we find ourselves trying to make deals with our Heavenly Father? How preposterous is that? Trying to make deals with the greatest and most powerful Being in all the universe? Do

we find ourselves using a quid pro quo attitude and mentality in our prayer life? Especially in times of crises, especially in times when we need God because we have run out of options? Do we find ourselves praying that we promise to obey Him if only He would heal us, or if only He would take away whatever pain or suffering that we are experiencing, or if only He would bless us with this blessing or that blessing? The list goes on and on.

On a physical level, maybe you have a goal of getting a better job, or a higher position, or getting a nice raise or a nice bonus. Maybe you want a new car. Maybe you want a new house. If that is your goal, and then you meet that goal and you succeed, and you receive that better job, you get that bonus, you get that new car or that new house or that new whatever it is in your mind that you want and desire, what then? With time the newness of that blessing wears off, and then you have a new goal, and that old goal is not so golden anymore. It is not quite so important anymore. Once you have received that bonus and you get used to getting that money, then you want more. When you get the new house—it's a beautiful new house—and after a few years, it's not your new house anymore.

How many stories have we heard about people winning the lottery and receiving tens and hundreds of millions of dollars? Many people believe that that would solve all of their problems. Oh, if only I could have more money! If only I could have more money, I'd be happy! But once they have received their fortune, many have found that they are more miserable than ever before.

What occurs on this physical level is also true in our spiritual lives as well. Getting something from God cannot be the chief motivator in our obedience to Him and His laws and His precepts, because once we receive what we want, then what? Even when we receive eternal life, then what? What would be our motivation for obedience then? We got what we want so why are we going to obey the Father then? We are going to live for trillions and trillions and quadrillions upon quadrillions of years. We are going to live forever with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Again, if our goal in obeying God is only to receive eternal life, then what happens after we receive eternal life? Why would we obey God the Father then? At this level, we still are doing the right actions for the wrong reasons.

The next level in the maturing process of our obedience to God is:

4. Level 4 – Obeying God the Father in order to impress or please others.

As children grow into their teen years, peer pressure becomes a very dominant and evident force in their lives. Peer pressure to conform is so intense when our children are in middle school and high school. How many stories have we heard of teenagers doing actions which they would never have done alone, but they did them because of the group? They acted in order to conform and to fit in with that group, even if deep down they knew they were doing something that wasn't correct and really deep down did not want to do.

Brethren, do we find ourselves obeying God in order to fit into the Church? Do we obey God because it is what is expected of us to be in the Church? Do we ostensibly keep the Sabbath and God's laws because it is what everyone else in the Church is doing? It is what is expected of us, and we do it because it is expected of us. In Matthew 6:1 The Pharisees were great examples of people who do the right things for the wrong reasons. They obeyed God, but they obeyed for unrighteous reasons. One of these was to please and impress others and to be seen of others.

Matthew 6:1 *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

2) *Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

3) *But when you do alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:*

4) *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which sees in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

5) *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

6) *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

7) *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

8) *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (KJV)*

Christ said that they received their reward because of the adulation of the crowd. It had been done in a very public and hypocritical way. It was not as a result of their obedience to God.

Obeying God the Father to impress or please others are a farce and a pretense. Jesus warned about worshipping the Father in a hypocritical manner by quoting Isaiah 29:13. We read this in Matthew 15:8 in the New Living Translation.

Matthew 15:8 *These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

9) *Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God. (NLT)*

When we obey our Heavenly Father to impress or please others, we fall into the characteristics of the people in the end time who Paul describes in 2 Timothy 3:5, again from the New Living Translation.

2 Timothy 3:5 *They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could*

make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT)

The problem with this level of spiritual maturity is, that if we obey God the Father because of trying to impress or please others who are themselves obeying Him, what happens if these people stop obeying the Father? Do we still try to impress and please them? How are we then grounded in God's way of life? Why are we obeying the Father? Again, at this level, we still are doing the right actions for the wrong reasons.

The next level in the maturing process of our obedience to God is:

5. Level 5 – Obeying God the Father because we love Him.

As the young man or young woman becomes more mature, they learn to obey parents because of the love and respect that they have for their parents. My parents were teetotalers. They were very much against drinking alcohol. Growing up in a Protestant household in the Southern United States back in the sixty's and seventy's, I grew up in a house that was very dry. My Mom and Dad never drank, not even once. The legal drinking age in North Carolina back in the 1970's was 18. I remember when I was 18 and 19 years old, being on campus at the university that I was at, in a very "wet" environment. Everybody drank, everybody was getting drunk—a very wet environment! I never drank alcohol out of my love and respect for my parents. The only alcohol that I had before I turned 20 was at Passover. I obeyed their wishes even though they were not there on campus.

We all have our own personal stories of how we obeyed our parents because we wanted to respect their wishes and show love to them. We obeyed them because of our love for them. The same is true with obeying God.

The Apostle John wrote about the main way that we can show love to God.

1 John 5:2 *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: and his commandments are not grievous. (KJV)

John explained that we show love to God by keeping His commandments, by obeying Him. That's how we show love for Him. On Passover night the Apostle John also recorded important words of Jesus, which He had said on the last night of His life. John 14:15 is a short, simple verse (only 7 words), but it brings a powerful message.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments. (KJV)*

Christ continued a few verses later in Verse 21.

John 14:21 *He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,*

and will manifest myself to him.

22) Judas says unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23) Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (KJV)

If we love our Heavenly Father, we will keep His commandments. If we love Him, we will obey Him. We will show our love for Him by obeying His laws and commands.

King David was a man after God's own heart. When Paul was preaching in the synagogue in Antioch, he referred to the events of 1 Samuel 13 when King Saul disqualified himself because of his stubborn disobedience. God chose King David instead.

Acts 13:21 *And afterward they [Israel] desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.*

22) And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

23) Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus: (KJV)

King David had his share of faults. He sinned; he really sinned. When he sinned, he sinned big. But in the end his heart always chased after God. He still, to his death, yearned to please Him.

Brethren, are we men and women after God's own heart? Is our goal and desire to please our Father? Is that our focus each day? When we obey Him, are we obeying Him because we want to please Him? God's law and commandments exemplify God Himself. They are an extension of His mind, His nature, His essence, His will and His being. When we obey Him, when we obey His laws, we become more like Him.

Obedience to our Heavenly Father is the process by which we become more and more like Him in our minds, in our nature, in our desires and in our will. Obedience to the Father out of our love for Him represents the spiritual maturity of obeying for the right reasons. At this level, we begin doing the right actions for the right reasons. But obedience to our Heavenly Father because we want to please Him does not represent the highest level of maturity in our obedience to Him. The desire to please Him is paramount, is crucial and so important. But although it is crucial and necessary that we please Him, there is still yet, one higher level of spiritual maturity in our obedience to Him.

The final level in the maturing process of our obedience to our Heavenly Father is:

6. Level 6 – Obeying God the Father because we earnestly desire to obey.

This level is the pinnacle of maturity. We obey not because of any external force or pressure. We obey because we truly and willingly desire to obey our Heavenly Father. This is the level that God the Father and Jesus Christ exist on. Who forces God the Father to obey His own laws? Who does God the Father try to please when He obeys His own laws? Does He try to please Jesus? The angels? The 24 elders? Who is looking over God the Father's shoulder to make sure that He's obeying His own laws? It almost sounds silly; in fact, it is silly. God the Father obeys His own laws because He desires to. His laws are an extension of Himself.

Brethren, are we obeying God's laws and precepts because we earnestly desire to obey, even when the frailties of this life prevent us from obeying fully? Do we love God's law? Are we making God's law, His commandments an extension of ourselves and of our own mindset?

In Psalm 119, we read of David's love for God's law. Here is the man after God's own heart acknowledging his deep love for His law. We sing these words in Hymn 77 in the hymnal.

Psalm 119:97 *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

98) *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

99) *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

100) *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

101) *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*

102) *I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.*

103) *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

104) *Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore, I hate every false way.*

105) *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

106) *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

(KJV)

King David loved God's law. Even into his old age, King David had a deep desire to obey God the Father. In 1 Chronicles 29:18 King David knew that he would not live much longer, and he turned the kingdom of Israel over to his son, Solomon. And at the investiture ceremony, King David prayed a very insightful prayer which gives us a glimpse into his heart and his unwavering desire to obey the Father. This is from the New Living Translation also.

1 Chronicles 29:18 *O LORD [Yehovah], the God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make your people always want to obey you. See to it that their love for you never changes.*

19) *Give my son Solomon the wholehearted desire to obey all your commands, laws, and decrees, and to do everything necessary to build this Temple, for which I have made these preparations.* (NLT)

This final level is where we take ownership of our obedience to God and to His laws. At this level, we have internalized His laws to where we make them our own. This is where God desires for all of us to be, where His laws become our laws, and they are in our hearts. They become part of us. Adherence to the Laws of our Father become a permanent inculcated extension of ourselves for all eternity. This highest pinnacle of spiritual maturity represents doing the right actions for the right reasons.

It is what God the Father desires and that is what God the Father intends. God the Father has studied each and everyone one of us, and He has placed us in His Church as He sees fit, to further His plan, to further His Work, and to populate the governance in His Kingdom. God the Father loves us dearly as His children, and Jesus Christ loves us dearly as His brothers and sisters.

God the Father has huge unbelievable plans for each and every one of us. He is going to give us the keys to eternity. With our resurrection to spiritual life, as members of His spiritual family, we will have a whole new spiritual dimension opened up to us. We cannot even begin to imagine the glory, the joy, the energy, the happiness and the excitement that we will always have for the rest of eternity - together as a family. The Apostle Paul describes this future in his Epistle to the Corinthian congregation in 1 Corinthians 2:9 in which he referred to from Isaiah 64:4.

1 Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* (KJV)

Brethren, our Heavenly Father wants to know that He can trust us with eternal life. He has to know. Not for just a hundred years from now, not for just a thousand years from now, not for just a million years from now, not for just 10 trillion quadrillion quintillion years from now, but for all eternity. To have that trust, when God the Father gives us the total power to never sin, what will be the reason for us to obey Him?

Will we be obedient to God's law then because we don't want to be punished? Will we be obedient because we are being forced? Will we be obedient because we want to get something in return? Will we be obedient because we want to please some other spiritual being? Or will we be obedient because we want to always please our Heavenly Father and ultimately, because we internally desire to always please Him?

Brethren, in the coming weeks, let's take a deep look at ourselves as to why we are doing what we are doing. God the Father is desiring that we obey Him; He truly does want us to obey Him, but He is also keenly interested in the reason why we are obeying Him. In other words, He is interested in the "why" as much as the "what". Because the "why" has to last for eternity.

Brethren, are we maturing? Are we growing? Are we overcoming our sins? Are we winning our spiritual battles? Are we increasing our desire to follow our Heavenly Father and to obey Him and to become more like Him? Do we desire to comply with the intent that is in His Laws?

Let's review the six levels of maturity in our obedience to our Heavenly Father.

Level 1 – We obey God the Father in order to avoid punishment.

Level 2 – We obey God the Father in order to meet a forced requirement.

Level 3 – We obey God the Father in order to get something.

Level 4 – We obey God the Father in order to impress or please others.

Level 5 – We obey God the Father in order to please Him.

Level 6 – We obey God the Father because we earnestly desire to obey Him.

To conclude, please turn to Ephesians 4. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is when we obey our Heavenly Father because it is the right and just thing to do. Although we will always want to please Him, we must take spiritual ownership of our obedience to God's commandments and way of life. We must make our Father's laws and precepts and their intent, be an integral part of us and an extension of ourselves. Our ownership of God's laws and God's love must last for an eternity.

Ephesians 4:13 *This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

14) *Then we will no longer be immature like children. (NLT)*

Brethren, are we measuring up to the full and complete standard of Jesus Christ? Are we taking ownership of our obedience to God the Father and His laws? Brethren, there can be so many reasons for why we do what we do. There can be so many reasons and so many motives for our actions, even when those actions are good.

Remember, we can do the right thing for the wrong reasons. We can be obeying our Heavenly Father for all the wrong reasons. God the Father sees all, and He knows all. He knows what we are thinking and why we are doing what we are doing; nobody can fool the Father.

Let us strive to focus on pleasing God the Father and Jesus Christ with our actions, our thoughts, our attitudes and our motives. Let us strive to take ownership of our obedience to Them, so that we not only obey the Father to please Him, but that we obey Him because we earnestly desire to follow His laws, now and for all eternity.

Brethren, I end this message with a question that only you can answer:

Why do you obey our Heavenly Father?