



Obedience – God's Way of Sanctification

It helps us to understand that God's school of obedience does not enslave us but leads us into a closer relationship with Him. I would like to divide the definition of obedience into the following two areas:

- *Secular word meaning*
- *The Biblical Definition of Obedience*

Secular Word Meaning of Obedience

Submission to the will of an authority, obedience to the law, to superiors.

*Synonyms used in various aspects; are:
devotion, obedience, docility, subordination.*

- *obedience* *willfulness.*
- *pejorative* *subservience.*
- *outdated* *docility, subordination.*

To submit entirely to the will of a person who has the appropriate authority, to follow his orders precisely and without contradiction.

*Synonyms additives that are frequently used are:
kind, well-behaved, obedient, docile.*

The Biblical Definition of Obedience

The biblical understanding of obedience differs significantly from the secular word meaning obedience.

Unfortunately, for understandable historical reasons, we associate obedience with a mostly pale, negative aftertaste. Authorities whether political, military, educational, but also familial, are covertly, if not openly rejected.

The command-receiver order is sensitive, although often rightly disturbed. Recipients of orders today are no longer necessarily willing to obey blindly because this "obedience blindness" imprint seems at least suspect to us but is more than just understandable.

Therefore, it is enormously important to have really grasped the biblical concept of obedience. Then and only then will we succeed in dismantling the pent-up aversions to Christian obedience and enjoying its sweet fruits.

Obedience, as it is intended by God, in no case means blind cadaver obedience, but is an invitation to entrust oneself voluntarily and on

¹ Duden Meaning Dictionary 3 edition 2002

one's own responsibility to one's authority and guidance. This means that we are not forced to be obedient, but we are free to decide for or against it.

When we take a closer look at God's construct of obedience, it seems impossible for us to even work. There is no immediate compulsion, rather love is the incentive that should lead us to obedience.

Proper understanding of God's will.

The definition of obedience is to be contrasted with the agony of our carnal nature. On the premise that obedience to God is voluntary—but if we choose to be obedient to God, we bear the consequences of our decision—namely: death to our flesh.

Romans 8:13.

*13 For if ye live according to the flesh, ye must die; but if you **kill by the Spirit the deeds of the body**, you will live.*

Romans 12:1

*1 I now exhort you, brethren, in the face of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living, holy, God-pleasing sacrifice: this is your rational worship! 2 And do not conform to this course of the world but allow yourselves **to be transformed [in your being] by the renewal of your mind**, that ye may test what is the good and pleasing and perfect will of God.*

Obedience is God's educational program. While we conform to the image of God, through the school of obedience we become increasingly Jesus like nature.

The School of Obedience ... is expressed differently, sanctification. So, to become more like Jesus.

Jesus learned obedience- as an example

Hebrews 5:7-8

7 In the days of his flesh, he offered both requests and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One who could save him from death and was also heard for the sake of his fear of God. 8 And even though he was a son, he learned obedience from that which he suffered.

The definition contains multiple components namely:

- *To whom am I obedient*
- *What is obedience*
- *How does obedience work?*

Only when we have clarified or understood all these areas for ourselves are we prepared to decide as to whether we want to obey. If we are not willing to deal with these issues, we will never be able to voluntarily be obedient to anyone.

To whom am I obedient

- *Obedience is always directed towards one instance. Without knowing who I am obedient to, I have no basis for deciding what the required obedience should look like and who is the one I should be obedient to.*
- *I simply need to be aware that I am serving the one I am obedient to.*
- *Let us not deceive ourselves, we are always obedient to someone. We have no freedom of choice about this. Our agency is limited to who we want to be obedient to.*

What is obedience

- *Obedience is listening and taking in what is said and doing it. Obedience is the implementation of the spoken, written word or the will of a superior authority.*
- *Obedience has nothing to do with self-realization. Obedience in the biblical sense is to allow and promote the will of God in your life, with the consequence of acting against your own flesh or your own carnal interests.*
- *Obedience is therefore "intelligent listening" This is what the Bible calls being wise. By "being wise" we save ourselves frustrations and inner power struggles, which give the resurrection tendencies of our ego a new impetus again and again.*
- *Accordingly, obedience to God is nothing more than consistent implementation of our decision to follow Jesus.*

How does obedience work?

And these are the statements of The Holy Scriptures.

John 14:21–23

21 Whoever has my commandments, and keeps them, it is he who loves me; but he who loves me will be loved by my father; and I will love him and reveal myself to him... 23 If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him and make an apartment with him.

We have the commandments of God; we have His Word. Are we perpetrators and listeners of the Word? An intelligent listener becomes the perpetrator of the word and thus a lover. Doesn't the Bible tell us - if someone loves me, will he keep my word?

Jesus teaches us:

- *Who has my commandments ... We have His commandments and therefore no excuse not to know what Jesus wants from us.*
- *Who keeps my commandment ... If we know His commandments, why don't we keep them?*
- *He loves me ... Jesus wants us to prove our love to Him not with words but with.*
- *Whoever loves me is loved by my father ... We all want to be loved by the father. Let's start by loving Jesus.*
- *I will love him ... Loved, accepted by Jesus, what more beautiful we can not wish for, let alone imagine.*
- *I will reveal myself to him ... We seek a revelation, we long to see, understand, and experience more of Him. Let us begin by preparing the way for Him to reveal Himself to us.*
- *We will come to him and make apartment with him ... We long for his constant presence, that is what Jesus offers us.*

The Biblical Concept of Obedience

Jesus is given to us as an example for everything. We are to emulate him. Accordingly, Jesus is also an example to us in terms of obedience. Let's look at Him and we understand God's idea of obedience.

Hebrews 5:8

... and learned, although he was son, from what he suffered, obedience.

- *Obedience is learned. As in any learning process, efforts are associated with it.*
- *When obedience must be learned, it is alien to human nature, i.e., to our being.*
- *Biblical obedience is therefore a personal expression of will that has come about without external influence to submit unconditionally to the will of God.*
- *Obedience to God knows no consideration for our lives of our own. His understanding of obedience is absolute.*
- *Obedience is nothing more than a decision of will.*

However, there is a lot of "ifs and buts..." That may also be true. So, let's work out the connections. We read that Jesus learned obedience. We must be aware of one thing; he had decided to submit completely to the will of his father.

Obedience, like "any learning," is a temporal process that begins after the fundamental decision for a thing. To better understand this process, we divide it into its individual steps.

- *The decision to obey*
- *God's instruction to do his revealed will*
- *How does this happen?*

The decision to obey

Oh, that's how it is, so I must change through my performance. No, not at all. The Bible says that God educates His sons and daughters.

Education is nothing more than leading to the ability to live. Because we do not understand God's thinking and his ways, because they are so much higher than our thoughts and our ways, he leads us the way of obedience. We don't have to change, no, He changes us by obeying Him.

So, all God wants from us is to allow Him to change us. And the

consequence of this decision is that we do his instructions, his obvious will - that is obedience.

With our conversion, we have decided in principle to say yes to God's plan of salvation. We confess that He is our Lord. When someone is our Lord, we also do His will. Accordingly, we have decided to obey our Lord.

God's instruction to do his revealed will

God has given us his orders and laws. They apply regardless of time, culture, and personal circumstances. They give us information about God's revealed will.

- *The community, relationship with him*
- *Living with and with each other*
- *Life in society*
- *The behavior towards the authorities ... etc.*

His instructions can be placed on a very simple and yet so complex basis namely:

Mark 12:29-31

The Lord our God is Lord alone; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this: You are to love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than this.

Jesus Himself says that when we keep these two commandments, we are fulfilling the law and the prophets.

An example

I wondered what makes people friends of God. We read in the Bible of men and women whom God called His friends. They all had one thing in common, they were ready to obey God. I want us to take a closer look at one of God's friends...

... Abraham

Genesis 12:19

*1 And the LORD said unto Abram: Go out of your land, and from your kinship, and from the house of your father, into the land which I will show unto you!
4 And Abram went as the LORD had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him. But Abram was 75 years old when he moved from Haran.*

Abraham was willing to leave his land and father's house behind to follow God's call. It was not too arduous, not too hard, not too expensive, and not too ridiculous for him to comply with God's request.

Let's remember:

Obeying means leaving our comfort zone.

He heard and obeyed. When we begin to obey, we prepare to hear God's speech. That is understandable, what would there be to say if we have not yet done what we should be doing or simply do not want to do it.

Let's remember:

Our obedience opens the mouth of God

Genesis 15:1-6

1 After these things, the word of the LORD to Abram happened in a face like this: Do not be afraid, Abram; I am a sign to you, I will make your reward very great. 2 Then Abram said, "Lord, Lord, what will you give me? After all, I am going there childless, and the heir of my house will be the Eliezer of Damascus. 3 And Abram said, "Behold, thou hast given unto me seed, and behold, the son of my house shall inherit me. 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came unto him: Not this shall inherit thee, but he who shall come forth from thy body, who shall inherit thee. 5 And he led him out, saying, look up unto heaven, and count the stars, if thou may count them! And he said to him, "So numerous will be your offspring! 6 And he believed the LORD; and he credited it to him as justice.

Abraham received a promise from God that he would lead him to a land and make him a great nation through which all people would be blessed.

Only after Abraham had moved out, left everything behind and the time came when he slowly began to ask himself, how is this going to

be, did God extend his promise.

He has proved to God through his obedience that he trusts Him, loves Him, and believes Him. This created the conditions for "*God to hear*" and for God in turn to listen to and meet his needs, concerns, and desires.

Let's remember:

Our obedience to God's commandments makes us heard by God.

Genesis 15:13-16

13 And he said unto Abram: Surely, thou shalt know that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which does not belong unto them; and they will serve them, and they will be suppressed for four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation which they serve; and after that they will move out with great possessions. 15 But you, you will enter peace with your fathers, you will be buried in good old age. 16 And in the fourth generation they shall return here, because the measure of guilt of the Amorite is not yet full.

Surely Abraham could not imagine how all this could happen. How could a man in his eighty years imagine how he would become a great nation? In this area, too, God revealed His plan to Abraham.

Let's remember:

Obedience leads to God sharing His plans with us.

Genesis 16:16

16 And Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.

We know how the story went on. Sarah and Abraham could not wait for the promise and thought they had to help God's promise a little. This is how Ishmael was born. The Son of the flesh and not the son of promise.

Let's remember:

Even though God has revealed His purpose to us, it is He who makes His promise about our lives a reality. He doesn't need any help. All we achieve when we turn on ourselves is, we bring forth Ishmaels. Which

may look like the promise but are not the promise.

Thirteen years later:

Genesis 17:16

16 And I will bless her (Sarah), and also of her I give you a son; and I will bless her, and she shall become nations; Kings of peoples are to come from her. 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart, "Should a child be born to a centenarian, and should Sarah, a ninety-year-old, give birth? 18 And Abraham said unto God, Let Ishmael live before you! 19 And God said, no, but Sarah, thy wife, shall give birth to a son unto you. And thou shalt give him the name Isaac! And I will establish my covenant with him to an eternal covenant for his descendants after him.

God repeated His promise and at the same time made His true intention known to Abraham. We may wonder why God did not speak so clearly to Abraham thirteen years ago.

He did. For Sarah was his wife, from the then already existing marriage, the son of the promise should emerge. That was always what God wanted and promised. But Ishmaels are begotten when we cannot wait for God's time.

Thus, Abraham was asked to perform circumcision as a sign of the covenant on himself and his entire house. God's Word and observations show that before we share in His promise, God curtails our nature and character. From the covenant with Him, from the relationship with Him, the promise in our lives should and will be fulfilled.

Genesis 17:23-24

23 And Abraham took his son Ishmael, and all the slaves born in his house, and all the slaves bought with his money, all that was male among the men of the house of Abraham and pruned the flesh of their foreskin on that very day, as God had spoken unto him. 24 Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised on the flesh of his foreskin.

Let's remember:

Obedience also means that we must separate ourselves again and again from the habits, rituals and character deformities that have

become dear to us. God will circumcise our being and that hurts.

25 years have passed since he moved out. Only after this time was what had been promised to him fulfilled. He believed God, trusted Him, and experienced the fulfillment of the promise.

Genesis 21:25

2 And Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Abraham a son of his age, at the appointed time which God had told him. 3 And Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son, who had been born unto him, whom Sarah had given birth to him. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 But Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Let's remember:

God's promises have very little to do with our understanding of time and circumstances. For God, there is neither time nor impossibilities.

Abraham experienced that God's promise came true. How many times have we experienced for ourselves that God's promises have come into and for our lives, and yet we have not drawn any consequences from the wrong actions that Ishmaels has produced for us.

This is exactly what happened with Abraham. He made the promise of God Isaac live next to Ishmael.

What happened now shows us how to deal with god's own works. For "our Ishmaels" have nothing to do with the promise. God's promise for our lives cannot be strengthened if we continue to let our own works run on an equal footing.

We have no choice; we must choose Isaac or Ishmael.

Genesis 21:10-14

10 Then she said to Abraham, "Cast out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not become heir with my son, with Isaac!" 11 And this word was very evil in Abraham's eyes for the sake of his son. 12 But God said unto Abraham, do not let it be evil in thy eyes because of the boy and because of thy handmaid; in everything Sara says to you, listen to her voice! Because according to Isaac, you should be called ~~the~~ the offspring. 14 And Abraham set out early in the morning,

and he took bread and a hose of water, and gave it to Hagar, put it on her shoulder, and gave her the child, and sent her away.

Surely, we can imagine what it meant for Abraham to separate from Ishmael. He loved his firstborn son, surely he could not understand what Sarah was asking of him.

And yet he was ready to listen to God's voice. For God explained to him by whom his posterity was to arise. Then he realized that he had to choose God's promise.

Living in God's ways means that we choose God's promise unconditionally. We cannot allow ourselves to waver back and forth between God's ways and our own ways.

Let's remember:

If God's plan is to come to fruition over our lives, we must be willing to turn away from anything that counteracts this plan and send it into the wilderness.

But now we've finally made it. All steps have been taken to share in the promise. We moved out, we believed we trusted against all reason. We have allowed ourselves to be circumcised, we have renounced everything that stood in the way of God's promise. Is that really the case, or does the promise, the vision of God block our way to God Himself?

Genesis 22:119

And it happened after these things, then God tested Abraham. And he said to him, Abraham! And he said: Here I am! 2 And he said, take your son, your only one whom you love, Isaac, and go forth into the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall call unto thee!

Lord, here I am. Sounds like the answer of a servant or a soldier who is approached by a superior. It's not about asking; it's about confirming that you hear and are willing to obey.

Genesis 22:3

Abraham set out early in the morning, saddled his donkey and took his two

servants and his son Isaac with him. He split wood into a burnt offering and set out and went to the place God had given him.

Abraham did not argue with God, he did not plead or beg for the life of Isaac. He had learned to trust God; he had learned to respond to God's commands.

He had learned that God gave him a son from dead bodies. Why should it be impossible for God to give Isaac back to him? He knew that he knew that God had no limits, and if God required him to do so, he had a reason to do so.

From his own point of view, he knew that it didn't help him to intervene himself, he knew what it meant to leave everything behind. He had learned that trust pays off and God keeps his promises.

Genesis 22:4

On the third day, Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from afar.

They were on the road for three days and covered about 100 km during this time. I think it was the hardest and longest way of his life. It was a time when Abraham was on his own, walking this path of absolute obedience. He had no help, all he relied on was that he knew his God and trusted him that the promise over his life would be fulfilled.

Let's remember:

The times of the exam are short and fierce. His paths have a certain distance, and we can walk them, yes, we can reach the goal. In such ways, we have nothing more than God's promise that we will get through. These are times when the thoughts of our hearts are revealed.

Genesis 22:9-12

9 And they came to the place which God had given unto him. And Abraham built the altar there and layered the wood. Then he tied his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son, 11 Then the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, saying, Abraham, Abraham. And he said: Here I am! 12 And he said, do not extend your hand out unto the boy, and do nothing unto him! For now, I have

realized that you fear God because you have not withheld your Son, your only one, from me.

We know the history. For Abraham it was different he lived through. He did not know the end. He was simply willing to give God what God required of him.

He was willing to give the Son of the promise to God, he did not want anything to separate him from God. He knew about the value, the preciousness of the relationship with God, and there was nothing to outweigh that, not even his own flesh and blood.

Let's remember:

God will test us to see if we put our vision above Him or if we bereit sind, to let them die to have only him.

How can I achieve obedience to Abraham

Let's briefly summarize what we learned from the life of Abraham:

- *Being obedient means leaving our comfort zone,*
- *Our obedience opens the mouth of God.*
- *Through our obedience to God's commandments, we make ourselves heard by God.*
- *Obedience leads to God sharing His plans with us.*
- *Even though God reveals His purpose to us, it is He who makes His promise a reality over our lives. He doesn't need any help. All we achieve when we turn on ourselves is, we bring forth Ishmaels. Which look like the promise but are not the promise.*
- *Obedience also means that we must separate ourselves again and again from habits, rituals and character deformities that have become dear to us. God will and will circumcise us and those hurts.*
- *God's promises to our lives have very little to do with our understanding of time and circumstances. For God, there are no impossibilities.*
- *If God's plan is to come to fruition over our lives, we must be willing to turn away from anything that can counteract this plan and send it into the wilderness.*

- *The times of the exam are short, but violent. These paths have a certain distance, and we can walk them, yes, we can reach the goal. In such ways, we have nothing more than God's promise that we will get through.*
- *In these times, the thoughts of our hearts are revealed.*
- *God will test whether we put our vision above Him and whether we are willing to let them die to have only Him.*

This is the example of how obedience is learned. It would be so easy if the ego didn't always come forward. That is why we are doing as all the men and women of God and Jesus did:

Hebrews 5:8.

... and learned, although he was son, by what he suffered; obedience ...

We too learn obedience from what we suffer. But if we remember one thing, if we are still suffering, because we are supposed to be obedient, our "I" is not yet dead.

Accordingly, it is also true that if we stop suffering because we are to be obedient, we obey out of love. Then we grasped why we wanted to obey, out of love for God. The bible tells us that everyone should take up his cross daily!

Luke 9:23–26

But he said to everyone: If anyone wants to follow me, deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Who takes up a cross? But only the one who is willing to die on his cross and every day! We simply must be aware that we are like us, we can never, ever stand before God. Before God, only the essence of Jesus endures in us, which is why sacred scripture says:

If anyone wants to follow me, deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

If we want to follow Jesus, then the way is through self-denial, daily dying on our cross. The death of our ego, that, and nothing else is our

suffering and the only struggle we must fight.

We suffer because our being wants to do the works of the flesh, but God tells us to do His prepared works.

All that Jesus takes from us is what we don't need anyway, because in the end it always leads us to a dead end. When we realize this, we begin to see that it is a privilege that God has chosen us to be His children.

Then obedience is not coercion, if it is not pressure, no, then it is love. Then we obey out of love!

When we think this thought through to the end, obedience releases love. We live in active love for God and reciprocate His love through our lives. This, in turn, releases more of his love, in and to us:

John 14:21

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; but he who loves me will be loved by my father; and I will love him and reveal myself to him.

When we make obedience a principle, we enter God's cycle of love. Obedience- Love- Obedience- Love. And it looks like this:

- *Keeping Jesus' commandments- Love for Jesus*
- *Jesus loves back*
- *The pleasure of the father is above the obedient because, he Loves Jesus*
- *Jesus himself will reveal himself.*
- *We recognize Jesus in greater depth. Obedience is no longer the question because love counts.*

If we want more revelation from God, let us obey His commandments. More of Jesus automatically means more in the nature of Jesus in us. The essence of Jesus becomes stronger, permeating other areas of our being. Where more freedom is given to the nature of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit ripens.

But the fruit of the spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, abstinence.

The bottom line:

- *Being obedient is a will decision that shows how consistently I stand by my decision for God.*
- *Obedience needs to be learned.*
- *To be obedient to God is to die to your ego.*
- *Obedience to God's commandments is to prove your love to God.*

But there is still one question left, how do we get to the point where we really want to be obedient? Let's see how David prayed and I think that this prayer reflects what we are allowed to pray:

Psalm 51:12-13 and 19

Create a pure heart for me, God, and renew a firm spirit in me!

let me return the joy of your salvation and sustain me with a willing Spirit! 19 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and shattered heart you, God, will not despise.

The steps are actually very simple:

- **A pure heart**
No sin separating you from God is the basic requirement
- **A firm spirit**
Firmly founded in Jesus, a spirit who knows that he knows what he has in Jesus.
- **A willing spirit**
Support me with a willing spirit, I can't do it, but You stand by me through your spirit. A spirit who willingly submits to God and his commandments.
- **A broken and shattered heart.**
All the pride of the heart has no place in the lifestyle of obedience.

When we take this path of obedience, we become friends of God and

his friends he initiates into his plans.