

"Obeying the Gospel"

The gospel is a story of good news but it's also a story that demands a response! Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're looking at what it means to respond or to obey the gospel.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We bring you this gospel message each week because we know the value and the power of the gospel. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." The gospel is a preached message; it is powerful because it comes from God and gives us faith, hope, love, truth, grace, forgiveness, peace, and joy. No other message can lead to eternal life. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The gospel simply means good news. And it's good news that causes one to rejoice. When the early disciples "preached the gospel," they were announcing the good news of His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection from the grave. The Old Testament prophesied these things, and they came true in the New Testament. Because God raised His body up with power, the early disciples in Acts 2 could proclaim Him as the Lord and Christ who now sits upon the throne of His kingdom and offers salvation from sin. Now this gospel was a message for all the world.

The gospel is called several things: the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of our salvation, and the gospel of the grace of God. Galatians 2:14 speaks of the truth of the gospel, and Colossians 1:5 says the word of truth is the gospel. Colossians 1:23 speaks of the hope of the gospel. Revelation 14:6 calls it an eternal gospel; you see it remains relevant and powerful to this very day and forever. Thanks be to God.

This is an important study on obeying the gospel; and we offer it free! If you'd like a printed copy or our booklet "The Gospel," and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have free materials on our website at www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We now worship in song, we'll read from Titus 3:4 to 7, and explore what it means to obey the gospel.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus chapter 3 verses 4 through 7. Where he talks about how Jesus saves us.

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Jesus was willing to pay the price to die in our stead so that we could be saved. And Father we're thankful that You have washed us that You have caused us to be born again and that You have given us the hope of eternal life. Father help us to live for You always and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The gospel is not merely a message of love, hope, and salvation; it's a message the Lord Jesus wanted every person to take to heart, to respond to it from the heart, to let that message transform an old way of life into a new way of life. And that new life is an abundant life and eternal life. No message could be so important or so needed. 1 Corinthians 1:21 says, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

I hear some say that we're saved only by faith, that what we do doesn't really matter. But such ideas they fit well with Reformation theologians, they fit well with those theologians and sometime people who have various ideas. But some of those ideas contradict plain passages of Scriptures. For instance, Hebrews 5 verses 8 and 9 says about Jesus that, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." That means that Jesus saves those who obey Him. Faith alone is not enough. He doesn't make the promise of salvation to those who won't obey the will of the Lord. Obedience is important and is worth our taking time to study. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Now Jesus is the One who makes the rules, and we can't really change the will of the Father.

John 3 and verse 36 says, in the New American Standard that, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Disobedience to God leads to wrath not salvation. Many people point to the book of Romans, saying, well it teaches that one is saved by faith alone. And they like to quote passages like Romans 10 and verse 9, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." And they add verse 13 to that, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." And they believe that if one says a little prayer, that one is saved; but is this all that Romans says? Think about it. Those who quote these verses ought to pay attention to the context of verse 16, which says, "but they have not all obeyed the gospel." Talking about some being lost. You see this is the first time in the New Testament that this phrase, to obey the gospel, is used. But our obedience is spoken about all through the book of Romans.

Paul said in Romans 1 and verse 5 that "he (Paul) received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." At the very end of the book of Romans chapter 16, verses 25 and 6, Paul said that, he was preaching Jesus Christ, "according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith." Yes, it matters whether we obey the Lord Jesus. In fact Paul emphasized the need for obedience to what was taught in Romans 6:16 to 18:

"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Now here slaves of sin can change their lives when? When they obey the Lord. They can leave their old way of life and become servants of God. Obeying sin leads to death, but obeying the Lord results in righteousness.

When these pagan Romans decided to leave paganism, and become Christians, that paganism enslaved them to sin, what they did is they obeyed from heart a pattern, a form of teaching, that was given by the Lord. And they were committed to it. Yes, there is a pattern which matters, and we'll describe that pattern in a moment. They committed themselves to this pattern of teaching. And when

they obeyed it from the heart, the Lord freed them from sin! And they became servants of righteousness.

Well what is the pattern of teaching? Well, Paul described it earlier in that same chapter Romans 6 verses 1 to 7. And at this time he was reminding them of the old life, which they had left, and the new life they embraced. He wrote, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

"For if we have become united or planted with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Now this passage clearly provides the pattern by which God makes saints out of sinners, and children of God out of slaves to sin. Well what is that pattern? They leave sin by dying to sin. You can't be saved till you die to sin, and there is a specific way that happens. When we were baptized into Christ, we were also baptized into His death and crucified with Him on the cross. It was on the cross where He shed His blood, if you recall. And by means of baptism, God buries us with Christ into death. When we're physically baptized a person puts us under or buries us in the water, but at the same time God is burying us with Christ into death. When we're physically baptized, a person rises us up from the, he being raised from the water, that watery grave; but God raises us up with Christ to walk in newness of life. The old life is gone, and we're now born again in Christ.

If we have been planted or united with Him in the likeness of His death (that is burial into death), certainly we shall also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. And just as God raised up Jesus, so He raises us up! Our old self was crucified with Him for a reason. He did this in order that our body of sin might be brought to nothing that is done away with! We were crucified with Him in order to be freed from sin. And we're no longer slaves of sin. We're now God's people, slaves of righteousness. Romans 6 and verse 11 says to Christians, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." That's the pattern of salvation. Faith in Christ leads to repentance and being baptized.

Colossians 2:12 to 13 adds to this picture: "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, (that is with Jesus) having forgiven us all our transgressions." Now being baptized is not some work that you do to earn salvation. Being baptized is an act of faith in the powerful working of God. In baptism we are passive, and God is active. God is at work on us in baptism. And being baptized means God is making us alive. That God forgives our sins. That God makes us His child. And that takes place in baptism (Galatians 3:26 and 7). In baptism God adds us to the (Acts 2 and verse 41). It's God who buries us with Christ and raises us up with Christ. And He does that in baptism. When I hear someone say well, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved," well I just marvel at that ignorance! And I have to respond, "Why are you interfering with the work of God?" Why?

The need to be baptized has been God's way from the beginning. On the day of Pentecost, when the Lord's church began, people learned they needed to be baptized. And the first gospel message convicted the hearts of those who heard Peter preach about the death, burial, and resurrection of

Jesus Christ. And that's the gospel. And he concluded the sermon by pointing out the guilt of the people present; and they were guilty of crucifying Jesus. And so Peter said in Acts 2 and verse 36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus (and then he says) whom you crucified."

Well these guilty people were "pierced to the heart" they wanted to know what to do about their guilt. Peter said to them in Acts 2:38 to 40, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and he kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" Repenting and being baptized is what they did, and they were saved. Acts 2:41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." Repenting and being baptized is what you too must do if you wish to be saved.

Now as you read through the book of Acts, one thing is very, very clear. Their message about Jesus, in the gospel, was urgent. This message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus cries to us and it awaits an answer. The gospel demands a response. I don't understand how one could hear these precious, life-changing truths and just walk away in apathy as if nothing mattered. When the disciples preached Jesus, they preached with urgency, because they wanted to persuade people to follow Jesus.

And when people responded, they responded immediately. The 3000 people responded that day. The people in the city of Samaria responded immediately. Acts 8 and verse 12 says, "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike." The Ethiopian Eunuch asked to be baptized, because he wanted to be saved. Saul of Tarsus didn't wait, when Ananias approached him. The Philippian jailor was baptized the same hour of the night he learned about Jesus. You see this urgency in the gospel response is clear when we realize repentance and being baptized are necessary to our forgiveness of sins and our salvation.

Now that obedience to the gospel is necessary to our eternal salvation. And that's very clear not only from this passage but other passages. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 9, "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." And if you refuse to know God or if you refuse to obey the gospel, you put your soul at risk for eternity. Peter reasoned in 1 Peter 4:17 to 18, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?" Now these passages help us to understand that obeying the gospel is not a trivial matter. We cannot live with God eternally if we refuse to obey. Jesus saves those who obey Him. Have you obeyed?

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You teach us the things that we most need to know in order to be saved. And Father help us to do Your will. To repent of our sins. Help us to be baptized. Help us to live faithfully for the rest of our lives. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Some ask about Romans 10:13 that, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Have you considered how Paul called upon the name of the Lord. He learned about Jesus on the road to Damascus, but no Scripture says that he was saved at that point. He had to go into Damascus and be told what he must do (Acts 9 verse 6). He spent three days fasting and praying according to (Acts 9

verse 9 and verse 11). But He was not saved though he prayed for three days. You ask, “How do you know that?”

Well, Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus and told him what he must do. And Ananias said in Acts 22:16, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’ You see being baptized is the means of “calling on the name of the Lord.” 1 Peter 3:21 explains how baptism calls on God. It says “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Being baptized is how we call to God for salvation, so that we might have a good conscience. Salvation leads to a good conscience. And when you’re baptized into Christ, God washes away those sins, so that you see yourself in a new light. You’re born again and free from sin! Why not follow Saul of Tarsus in calling on the name of the Lord by being baptized into Christ? Follow the pattern and obey the gospel according to the Scriptures. Don’t settle for anything less.

We pray today’s study about obeying the gospel has helped you see God’s love for you. And if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message or our booklet “The Gospel,” mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry.” And like the program that helps spread it. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don’t worry, we’re not here asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. I know some of you can’t go because health reasons. But if you can go then go and be at church. There’s probably a church of Christ near you. If you’re looking for a Biblical, healthy church home, we’ll gladly help you find one. We’ll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.