

[c. 1940s. From a collection of tracts likely written by Gordon Clark]

I Samuel 15:22

To obey is better than sacrifice

I Peter 1:2

Elect ... unto obedience.

The words of these two texts are easy to understand; they are not so easy to put into practice. At least they are not easy to practice perfectly.

Two tackles went out for football at college. They both admired the coach and both enjoyed the game. They both obeyed a good number of the coach's instructions. In fact, each of them had but one fault. One would not memorize the plays, and the other skipped practice too often.

Is there not a class of Christians who resemble these students? They are willing to own Christ as Lord, they strenuously insist that only through the shed blood of Christ is salvation possible, and they hope for his return. They even obey fairly well, and are a welcome contrast to the wickedness of the world. Perhaps they are obeying all the precepts of which they are conscious. But perhaps also they are dimly aware of other precepts which they do not care to learn more accurately. They feel that such knowledge would entail an obligation to more obedience.

I Peter, not to mention other books of the Bible, gives a wider notion of obedience than is commonly supposed. Obedience involves, not merely external conduct like honesty, veracity, church-attendance, personal work, but it also involves internal, mental, intellectual action. It involves belief. In I Peter 2:7-8 the opposite of disobedience is belief, and those who refuse to believe are disobedient. In 4:17 the connection between obedience and accepting the gospel is again indicated. Compare also 1:22 and 3:1.

Belief and external action are of course closely related. Sincere belief produces action, and actions are an indication of a person's belief.

But a typical Christian in the United States might reply in a hurt voice, "Do I not believe the simple gospel of Jesus Christ? Does not my action show that I believe the blood atonement?" That is true, and that is commendable, but yet does the Bible teach us to limit our belief to the blood-

atonement? Are not Christian ministers commanded to “Go ... and teach all nations, ... teaching them to observe **all things whatsoever** I have commanded you?”

How far, then, will the Christian obey the word of God? Will he study the doctrine of the Trinity or dismiss it as hair-splitting theology? Will he profess love to Christ and object to the preaching of the doctrine of election because it is “controversial?” Will he continue to support by money and personal membership a denomination hamstrung by modernism when the divine command is to come out and be separated from the unclean things? Will he support an independent church when Acts 15 teaches that all local congregations should be subject to a general council?

Or will he earnestly try to remain in ignorance for fear that that obedience may become too onerous?

And yet the purpose of election is obedience.

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