



OBEDIENCE

DAWSON MCALLISTER

(2 John 6)

It has been said that one of the things that made Alexander the Great so imposing was the commitment his soldiers showed to him. Alexander and a small band of soldiers approached a small fortified city one day and sought to seize it. Alexander demanded to see the king and asked for his surrender. The king, not impressed with the small band of soldiers, refused.

Alexander asked the king to gather the people of the city atop the city wall to watch a demonstration. As the townspeople gathered, Alexander ordered his soldiers to march single file toward a nearby cliff. One by one, the soldiers plunged to their doom until Alexander ordered those who remained back to his side.

At the sight of such overwhelming devotion, the king immediately surrendered the city. The king had realized that if Alexander's men were willing to commit suicide at his mere command, nothing could stop his eventual overthrow of the city.

Think of the difference that it would make if Christians today had the same mentality as Alexander's soldiers—obedience at any cost. Obedience is not always easy or popular. Often it is very difficult and costly. Whether it is obeying a parent, a boss, a command in Scripture, or a prompting from the Holy Spirit, obedience is easy to talk about and difficult to do. Nonetheless, it is something that God clearly requires of His children.

OBEDIENCE RELINQUISHES SELF

Obedience requires an abandonment of self and a dependence upon Christ. Sometimes Christ requires more than we are willing to give. Sometimes He leads in a direction where we do not want to go. At those times, our focus must be on Christ and not on our circumstances or ourselves.

When God commanded Abraham to lay his son upon the altar, Abraham surely had questions and doubts about the direction in which God was leading. In Genesis 22:2 God said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Imagine the pain and disbelief Abraham felt as God said those words! God was acknowledging how important Isaac was to Abraham, yet demanding that Abraham offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Inconceivable. Against all logic. No doubt, Abraham reasoned that he must have misinterpreted God's command, that he must have heard God wrong. Abraham probably had a very sleepless night—praying, begging, pleading, and bargaining. It was a total act of selflessness for Abraham to be willing to give up the special son that God had given him.

OBEDIENCE REQUIRES TRUST

Perhaps the greatest reason obedience is so difficult is the trust factor. Obeying God requires a certain level of trust in Him. It's hard to obey someone if we don't trust them. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because of his firm belief in God. He believed that God would fulfill all He had promised.

When talking to his servants, Abraham said, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad

and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you" (Gen. 22:5). He had full trust that *both* he and Isaac would return from the mountain.

Again, Abraham expressed his trust in God when he told Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). Abraham believed God and had trust that He would provide a sacrifice in place of Isaac. Imagine the trust that it took for Abraham to raise the knife in the air. Until the final moment when God's angel intervened, Abraham was carrying out the act that God had commanded him to do. Abraham obeyed because he trusted.

OBEDIENCE RESULTS IN BLESSING

The fruit of obedience is blessing, though the blessings are not always readily apparent. Any time we are disobedient, we are moving outside the realm of God's will for our lives, thus we are subject to the consequences that result from our actions. If we obey God's commands, however, the greatest blessing of all is ours—remaining in Christ and His love. "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments" (2 John 6).

God promised Abraham many years of blessing because of his great obedience: "Because you . . . have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 22:16, 17). Not only would Abraham be blessed, but also his descendants would be blessed for generations to come.

Jesus obeyed the Father and had total dependence on Him. How much more should we be dependent on the Father! Jesus' example is the ultimate example of obedience. Although He had to go before God in agonizing prayer, Jesus obeyed the will of His Father. He endured the scorn of the Cross and the suffering of mankind's

sin, because it was God's will: "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39).

Mark Twain once said, "Always do right. This will gratify most people, and astonish the rest." Cynical society almost boasts of doing the wrong thing and is utterly amazed when people of faith display selflessness and trust. However, for the Christian, obedience is not just an option. Though difficult, costly, and demanding, the life of a Christian is based upon total dependence on Christ and obedience to His will.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of obedience include:

- > Deuteronomy 6:1-25
- > Matthew 8:27
- > Romans 2:8
- > Philippians 2:5-8
- > Hebrews 11:8

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on obedience at 1 Samuel 15:22 on page 363. See also the personality profile of Saul on page 362.

GREETING THE ELECT LADY

The Elder,

¹To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, ²because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you^a from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

WALK IN CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS

⁴I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received

commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. ⁶This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

BEWARE OF ANTICHRIST DECEIVERS

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an

³ ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *us*.

SOUL NOTE



One Truth (1-4) One truth exists, and that truth is found in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). John wrote this letter to help believers remain in the truth and not stray into false teachings. In order to resist false notions and ideas, believers must remain grounded in God's Word. When we know the Bible, we learn the truth and will see when any teaching contradicts it. We must continue "walking in truth," for then we will be able to see what is false and steer clear of it. **Topic: Truth**

SOUL NOTE



Love Revealed (6) Loving God means obeying Him. When we love God, we desire to "walk according to His commandments," meaning that we want to obey Him. That obedience reveals our love for Him. Love for God doesn't focus merely on feelings, although those certainly are involved; it's about what we do. God's commandments are found in His Word. We obey not because we are trying to be good enough to be saved or to have a certain amount of good deeds to outweigh bad deeds. We obey because we love God and desire to please Him. **Topic: Obedience**

SOUL NOTE



True or False? (7) Jesus had warned that false teachers would arise and lead many people astray (Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24). False teachers will teach any number of doctrines that might sound good but are contradictory to God's Word and, therefore, are lies. Believers can discern false teaching by discovering what the teacher believes about Jesus Christ. Some will teach that Jesus did not actually come in the flesh; others will teach that Jesus was merely flesh and not God. If anyone contradicts the Bible's definition of Christ being both human and divine, then that person is a false teacher. **Topic: Cults**

became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," ¹¹of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

THE PERIL OF NOT PROGRESSING

6 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³And this we will^a do if God permits.

⁴For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy

Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they fall away,^a to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

⁷For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸but if it bears thorns and

briers, *it is rejected* and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

A BETTER ESTIMATE

⁹But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. ¹⁰For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of^a love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

GOD'S INFALLIBLE PURPOSE IN CHRIST

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."^a ¹⁵And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute.

¹⁷Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸that by two immu-

table things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might^d have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

¹⁹This *hope* we have as an anchor of the

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

HEBREWS 6:19

6:3 ^aM-Text reads *let us do*. 6:6 ^aOr *and have fallen away* 6:10 ^aNU-Text omits *labor of*. 6:14 ^aGenesis 22:17 6:18 ^aM-Text omits *might*.

SOUL NOTE



Radical Obedience (5:8, 9) Jesus demonstrated obedience even through suffering by undergoing a painful execution in order to obey His Father's plan. He knows what it means to obey God in the midst of trying circumstances. Christ's radical obedience is comforting because He knows and shares in our sorrows.

Believers are called to radical obedience, too. At times, we too will be called on to learn real obedience through suffering, and at those times we can turn to Jesus, because He knows exactly how to help us. **Topic: Obedience**

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹²Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

¹⁷Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

PRAYER REQUESTED

¹⁸Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring

to live honorably. ¹⁹But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

BENEDICTION, FINAL EXHORTATION, FAREWELL

²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you^a what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

²²And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. ²³Know that *our* brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

²⁴Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

²⁵Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

13:21 ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *us*

SOUL NOTE



God Is There (13:5) Loneliness is part of the human experience. But being alone is different from being lonely. When people feel lonely, they feel like they don't belong, like no one cares, unloved and unwanted. When believers feel lonely, they need to remember God's great promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." No matter how painful or difficult our situation, no matter how alone we feel, God is there. We can look to Him for deliverance, commit the situation to His care, and take comfort in His presence. God is always with us. **Topic: Loneliness**

SOUL NOTE



Loving Shepherds (13:17) The words, "obey those who rule over you," refer to believers obeying their spiritual authorities—pastors, elders, teachers, and so forth. Wise and godly leaders, called by God into positions of spiritual authority, have the heavy responsibility to "give account" to God as they care for the souls and spiritual growth of those in their care. Many leaders face a constant stream of turmoil, complaints, and judgmentalism. We can ease their burden by praying for them, encouraging them, and seeking to be helpful and supportive. **Topic: Obedience**

women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

³⁴Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

DAVID ANOINTED KING

16 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

²And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me."

But the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you."

³So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

⁴And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to

sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!"

⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees;" for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

⁸So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."

¹⁰Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."¹¹And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep."

16:7 ^aSeptuagint reads *For God does not see as man sees*; Targum reads *It is not by the appearance of a man*; Vulgate reads *Nor do I judge according to the looks of a man*.

KEY PASSAGE

BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

(15:22)

Obedience

A form of this theme occurs in several places in the Bible: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (see also Ps. 40:6-8; 51:16, 17; Prov. 21:3; Is. 1:11-17; Jer.

7:21-23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8; Matt. 12:7; Mark 12:33; Heb. 10:8, 9). Clearly this is an important concept for God's people.

Saul had been told to wait for Samuel so that Samuel could offer the sacrifice. Saul, however, fearing the enemy, rushed to perform the sacrifice, thinking that it would magically provide protection. In this act, Saul disobeyed Samuel, as well as God's laws regarding the offering of sacrifices (the king was not to do it). God doesn't perform for people because of a ritual sacrifice or any other religious act; He acts on behalf of His obedient people. God wants obedience that flows out of love for Him.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about obedience on pages 1686, 1687. See also the personality profile of Saul on page 362.



As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and
idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of
the LORD,
He also has rejected you from *being* king."

²⁴Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned,
for I have transgressed the commandment of
the LORD and your words, because I feared the
people and obeyed their voice. ²⁵Now there-
fore, please pardon my sin, and return with
me, that I may worship the LORD."

²⁶But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return
with you, for you have rejected the word of
the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from
being king over Israel."

²⁷And as Samuel turned around to go away,
Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.
²⁸So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn
the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has
given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is better*
than you. ²⁹And also the Strength of Israel will
not lie nor relent. For He *is not* a man, that He
should relent."

³⁰Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor
me now, please, before the elders of my peo-
ple and before Israel, and return with me, that
I may worship the LORD your God." ³¹So Sam-
uel turned back after Saul, and Saul wor-
shipped the LORD.

³²Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the
Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him
cautiously.

And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of
death is past."

³³But Samuel said, "As your sword has made

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Obedience

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

(1 SAMUEL 15:17-23)

"We want a king!" Years after settling in the Promised Land, the Israelites clamored for a ruler so they could be "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). They had been graciously chosen to be like no other nation, but they forgot that God was their only true king and protector. They also forgot specific warnings about the cost of kings, precautions that God had given them through Moses (Deut. 17:14-20).

The judge Samuel reluctantly anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. Saul was tall, handsome, and had the right reputation as a respected military leader. Unfortunately, Saul's admirable qualities were overshadowed by a dark side that came to dominate his life. From the start of his reign, Saul demonstrated a tendency to cut corners, tell half-truths, justify bad behavior, and blame others for his own mistakes. He was determined to reign his own way, which often meant direct disobedience to God.

Saul also suffered from terrible bouts of depression, spirit oppression, and despair. David's miraculous triumph over Goliath and the resulting praise of the people stirred in Saul feelings of fear and jealousy. He hated David as a possible rival for the throne. He overlooked his own failures and allowed murderous intentions toward David to take root in his soul. Obsessive hatred poisoned and ruled Saul's life until the time of his death.

Saul repeatedly disobeyed God's directions. He tried to cover up his willfulness before God. Samuel confronted him each time with the truth that it is always better to obey God than to offer sacrifices. Saul thought he could replace obedience with appearance. He chose his own way (even witchcraft), rather than the way of the Lord. His ways seemed right to him, but they led to death.

The lessons from Saul's life include the truth that there is no effective substitute for obedience to God. If our way isn't God's way, it's the wrong way.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about obedience on pages 1686, 1687. See also the key passage note at 1 Samuel 15:22 on page 363.

really burn the fat first; *then* you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force."

¹⁷Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

SAMUEL'S CHILDHOOD MINISTRY

¹⁸But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod.

¹⁹Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring *it* to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD." Then they would go to their own home.

²¹And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

PROPHECY AGAINST ELI'S HOUSEHOLD

²²Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel,^a and how they lay with the women who assembled at the

door of the tabernacle of meeting. ²³So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. ²⁴No, my sons! For *it* is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress. ²⁵If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.

²⁶And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

²⁷Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? ²⁸Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? ²⁹Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded *in My* dwelling place, and honor your sons more

2:22 ^aFollowing Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint omit the rest of this verse.

SOUL NOTE



What a Contrast! (2:17, 18) Eli, the high priest of Israel, had "corrupt" sons who "did not know the LORD" (2:12). Their hearts were so hard that God decided to kill them. In their responsible position as priests, their corruption deserved extreme punishment. In vivid contrast, Samuel "ministered before the LORD, even as a child" (2:18). When God spoke to Israel, he spoke not to Eli, but to Samuel (3:10). God's guidance and blessing come to His obedient servants. But those who reject Him are left to their own ways—and will face judgment. **Topic: Obedience**

SOUL NOTE



Growing Up (2:21, 26) Young Samuel was growing "in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men." The Bible describes Jesus' growth in a similar manner: He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Children grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Just as parents feed their children good food to help them grow strong physically, they should also provide guidance and opportunities in the various areas of life so that the children can grow in wisdom and favor with God and the people around them.

Topic: Child Development

molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.'

'And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen!'

¹⁶'Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

¹⁷'Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's landmark.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

¹⁸'Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

¹⁹'Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²⁰'Cursed is the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's bed.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²¹'Cursed is the one who lies with any kind of animal.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²²'Cursed is the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²³'Cursed is the one who lies with his mother-in-law.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²⁴'Cursed is the one who attacks his neighbor secretly.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²⁵'Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

²⁶'Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.'

'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

BLESSINGS ON OBEDIENCE

28 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. ²And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

³"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

⁴"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

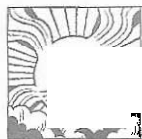
⁵"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

⁶"Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷"The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

⁸"The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

⁹"The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹²The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season,



SOUL NOTE

Loving Warnings (28:2, 15) Chapter 28 contains a list of blessings and curses. The people of Israel would experience the blessings if they kept their part of the covenant by obeying God. The curses, however, were God's certain punishment for disobedience. These curses were loving warnings about the natural consequences of sin. Wrongdoing toward God or others has tragic consequences. God's strong words are meant to help people avoid the consequences that will come from disobeying Him and hurting others. **Topic: Obedience**

and to bless shall lend to borrow. ²⁵And head and tail and not be mandments command g serve them. any of the day, to the gods to serve

CURSES ON I

¹⁵"But if obey the voice serve caref His statutes all these cur take you:

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them away.

- 11 "Then set the pot empty on the coals,
That it may become hot and its bronze
may burn,
That its filthiness may be melted in it,
That its scum may be consumed.
- 12 She has grown weary with lies,
And her great scum has not gone from
her.
Let her scum be in the fire!
- 13 In your filthiness is lewdness.
Because I have cleansed you, and you
were not cleansed,
You will not be cleansed of your
filthiness anymore,
Till I have caused My fury to rest upon
you.
- 14 I, the LORD, have spoken it;
It shall come to pass, and I will do it;
I will not hold back,
Nor will I spare,
Nor will I relent;
According to your ways
And according to your deeds
They^a will judge you,"
Says the Lord GOD. "

THE PROPHET'S WIFE DIES

¹⁵Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁶"Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow."

¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹And the people said to me, "Will you not

tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?"

²⁰Then I answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²¹'Speak to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²²And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow. ²³Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. ²⁴Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.' "

²⁵And you, son of man—will it not be in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters: ²⁶that on that day one who escapes will come to you to let you hear it with your ears? ²⁷On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the LORD. "

PROCLAMATION AGAINST AMMON

25 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them. ³Say to the Ammonites, 'Hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you said, 'Aha!' against My sanctuary

24:14 ^aSeptuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *it*.



SOUL NOTE

That Which Lasts (24:16) God chose to tell His message to Israel through Ezekiel by causing Ezekiel's wife ("the desire of your eyes") to die suddenly. This would show the people how suddenly they would lose their temple, the desire of their eyes (24:21). As Ezekiel's heart was broken, so would the hearts of the people be broken. God told Ezekiel not to mourn publicly, also as a sign to the people of what was to come. Ezekiel obeyed (24:18). Such radical obedience can come only from a heart that trusts completely in God and His ultimate goodness in the face of heartbreak.

Topic: Obedience

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ported, ²³saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside^a before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" ²⁴Now when the high priest,^a the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. ²⁵So one came and told them, saying,^a "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

²⁶Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

²⁹But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

GAMALIEL'S ADVICE

³³When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them. ³⁴Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claim-

ing to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. ³⁸And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God."

⁴⁰And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His^a name. ⁴²And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

SEVEN CHOSEN TO SERVE

6 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists,^a because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ²Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴but we will give

5:23 ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *outside*.

5:24 ^aNU-Text omits *the high priest*. 5:25 ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *saying*. 5:41 ^aNU-Text reads *the name*; M-Text reads *the name of Jesus*.

6:1 ^aThat is, Greek-speaking Jews

SOUL NOTE



God First (5:29) The apostles had their priorities straight. When the religious leaders demanded that they stop preaching about Jesus, the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." People are required to obey the laws of their country, workplace, etc. Believers should honor and pray for their leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-4) and submit to the governmental authorities and laws (Rom. 13:1-7). But if a law conflicts with God's Word, believers must obey God first, trusting that He will give them strength to stand firm in their faith. **Topic: Obedience**