



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 29:03:2009

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STUDY 13: OBEDIENCE – THE GATEWAY TO BLESSINGS

James 1:22-25

One of the missing ingredients in modern day Christianity is Christ-like obedience out of a humble and perfect heart (Phil 2:5-11). Often we find secular wisdom, diplomacy, psychology, self-will, etc interfering with the simplicity of implicit obedience. This is why Jesus warned that "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt 7:21); and that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). In our last study we observed that there are many "professors" and few "possessors" of the life of Christ (Titus 1:16) and challenged all to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Pet 1:10) through working "out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). We noticed the sad state of Christianity in today's world is captured in Charles Stanley's 1992 book, written at a time he was a pastor with over 13,000 members in his church in USA:

"The divorce rate for Christian adults isn't far behind that of the rest of the world. The percentage of Christian adolescents who are involved in pre-marital sex rivals the statistics for those kids who say they have no strong religious beliefs.... Statistically and observationally, there seems to be little difference between the lifestyles of the saints and the sinners.... That being the case, it is no wonder that so many non-Christians want nothing to do with Christ or His church. They know too many Christians...."

Our text reminds us of the importance of implicit obedience, the dangers of the lack of it as well as the blessings of obedience.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OBEDIENCE James 1:22

Obedience to the scriptures is the index of true christianity (Acts 5:29) and a dividing line between hypocrisy and godliness. Like the man who builds his house on the sand, self deception and wasted labour are the fruit of the disobedient (Mt 7:21-27). God deserves prompt obedience (Mt 4:19-22) from a genuine heart (Rom 6:17; Col 3:22; Eph 6:6) willingly offered (I Chron 28:9; Is 1:19). Such obedience should be total (I Sam 15:22; Dt 26:16), steadfast (Phil 2:12) and cheerfully given (II Cor 9:7). Like Ezra, true believers prepare their hearts to seek and do the word of God (Ezra 7:10).

THE STATE OF FORGETFUL HEARERS James 1:23,24

A forgetful hearer is likened to one who beholds his face in a mirror and then forgets what his face is like. The idea here is that of a person that discovers dirts that could be cleaned from the face, but drops the mirror and goes out to the public without cleaning the dirts - having forgotten what was on the face the moment the mirror was dropped. What a graphic illustration of many people's attitude and response to the Bible. What should make a person to read the bible, listen to gospel messages, attend bible studies but not be a doer of the word of God? What makes such a person to be forgetful of what s/he has just read/heard? What are the consequences of living in such a state? And how can this condition be alleviated? These and lots more are the issues that should concern a true believer who wants to avoid the snare of the fowler (Ps 91:3).

(i) Causes of forgetful hearing.

- a. Judgmental attitude (Jas 4:11)
- b. the condition of the heart (Mt 13:18-22)
- c. indifference, formality and sentimentality (Eze 33:31,32)
- d. self-will and pride (Titus 2:7; II Pet 2:9,10; Gen 49:6; Ecc 10:8)
- e. misinterpretation of the message (Mk 8:15,19)
- f. inadequate concentration to get the truth registered (II Tim 3:7)
- g. short memory (Jas 1:24)
- h. lack of deep convictions (Eph 4:14)
- i. prejudice, disappointed expectations, shallowness and unwillingness to go deep (John 6:66; 2 Kings 5:11)
- j. lack of deep roots / stable foundation (Lk 6:49; Mk 4:16,17)
- k. lack of sincerity to face real issues (Jn 3:19)
- l. pre-occupation with the affairs of this life & prayerlessness (Lk 21:34-36)
- m. despising vessels of honour (Lk 16:31)
- n. influence of the world / abundance of iniquity (Mt 24:12)
- o. lightness of spirit (Mt 22:5)
- p. a life given to pleasures (Is 47:8)
- q. love for ease (Amos 6:1; Ps 123:4; Is 32:9)

(ii) Consequences of forgetful hearing.

- a. living in self deception, error and sin (Jas 1:22; Gal 6:3; Rev 3:17)
- b. feeding on "ashes" and backsliding (Is 44:20)
- c. self flattery (Ps 36:2)
- d. Instability (Eph 4:14)
- e. exposure and judgment of sin and hypocrisies (Num 32:23; Job 20:27; Ecc 12:14; Lk 12:2; Pr 26:26; Ps 9:17)
- f. loss of divine favour and fellowship (Gen 3:8-24; I Jn 1:3-7)
- g. exposure to satanic oppression (II Pet 2:9,10; Gen 49:6; Ecc 10:8; Is 50:7)

THE BLESSEDNESS OF OBEDIENCE James 1:25

The escape route from the consequences of forgetful hearing is diligent obedience. This involves:

- (i) Looking into the perfect (not permissive) law of liberty and
- (ii) continuing therein.

The idea here is that of a diligent and laborious search to discover the perfect law of liberty and the constant application of self to keeping them (Ezra 7:10) and could be broken down into four categories:

- (i) Long perusal to ascertain the facts and retain them.
- (ii) allowing the facts to X-ray and mirror our lives to reveal the dirts, spots and blemishes.
- (iii) Taking practical steps to eradicate the dirts, spots and blemishes.
- (iv) re-examination of self by the original facts to ensure the dirts, spots and blemishes are:
 - (a) thoroughly eradicated; and
 - (b) do not re-appear in the future.

James assured that such a person will be blessed in his deeds. Some of the blessings of obedience could include:

- a. the cleansing effect of the word and divine favour (I Sam 15:22; Ex 19:5)
- b. entrance into the kingdom of God (Mt 7:21; Rev 22:14)
- c. transformation into the image and likeness of Christ (II Cor 3:18)

- d. success in every area of life (Josh 1:8)
- e. membership of the divine family (Mt 12:50)
- f. secures fellowship with the Godhead and saints (Jn 14:23; I Jn 2:17)
- g. unlocks the door to guidance and spiritual knowledge (Jn 7:17)
- h. Total well being for entire family (Dt 5:29)
- i. longevity (I Kg 3:14)
- j. Total freedom and deliverance (Jn 8:32,36)
- k. A solid foundation and reward for labour (Mt 7:24,25; I Cor 3:13,14)
- l. protection and preservation in time of trouble (Rev 3:10; II Pet 2:9; Ps 91:9-16)

"IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM" - John 13:17.