

Obedience by Vince Finnegan

With the SERMON ON THE MOUNT, Jesus scripted a radically different lifestyle than is common to humanity. He instructed us to live a holy life while in the midst of an evil age that continues to grow worse and worse. He concluded the teaching by emphasizing the importance of obedience. All that preceded in his sermon is meaningless unless we do what he taught. An intellectual acknowledgment of his teaching without obedience to it yields a fruitless life now and no entrance into the coming Kingdom.

Matthew 7:21-23

"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.

"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Those who say "Lord, Lord" and who prophesy, cast out devils, and do many miracles are not necessarily going into the Kingdom of God. Jesus did not specifically state that their works or words were wrong; rather, he said that the all important issue is obeying the commandments of God. Apparently, someone could say or do these things and yet be disobedient to God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Of all that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, he did not include signs, wonders, and miracles, because these things follow those who obey his words. The Scriptures also reveal that the Devil can empower his children to do supernatural things. The measuring stick for entrance into the Kingdom is obedience.

That which Jesus commanded in this sermon is – humility; mourning; meekness; mercy; purity of heart; being peace makers; being loving; having forgiveness, genuine deeds of compassion, genuine prayer, genuine fasting; not being involved with this world; living completely for God; seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; not judging; asking; seeking; knocking; doing to others the things you want others to do you. Make no mistake—these are the things God wants us to do, while we are also maintaining a genuine heart of loving obedience in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. "LORD" means having power and authority over others, a ruler that has preeminence to whom service and obedience are due. If we believe that Jesus is Lord, we must obey. Just saying "Lord, Lord" may sound good to self and others but is meaningless to the Judge, for he wants obedience. Faith and obedience are always companions.

The Sermon on the Mount was our Lord's first recorded teaching; and the sermon at the last supper, his last before his crucifixion. Obedience was the central theme in both presentations. The latter teaching gave specific and detailed instruction regarding the spirit of truth. To first receive the holy spirit and to walk by it thereafter require obedience to the commands of Christ (John 14:15-21). Therefore, it is mandatory to understand and live according to his teaching which is written within the Scriptures. The lordship of Christ has everything to do with his followers obeying his commands and not

just confessing his name. A precursor to walking by the spirit is the acceptance of the lordship of Christ, which implies a subordinate relationship of suppressing our will to be obedient to his will and is clearly stated in the Scriptures.

Those who talk about walking by the spirit yet habitually disobey God's written Word are deceived and are primarily attributing their own self-willed thoughts and actions to God. Many people are very zealous for the supernatural realm and seek manifestations of the spirit by contrived means rather than obedience to the Scriptures. The Christian Church has become desperate to be lead by the spirit. They tend to invent things that have little to do with God and bring shame rather than glory to Him. The outrageous and very emotional behaviors such as dancing in the spirit, slain in the spirit, laughing in the spirit, singing in the spirit, drunk in the spirit, and such like are very common in many churches today. It may be that some of these actions were at one point inspired by God for an isolated incident, but since have been mimicked without God's leading. These things are often carried on by very sincere people who long to walk by the spirit but fail to understand and obey the Scriptures. Their actions are learned by observing others and not by a firm adherence to the Scriptures nor the inspiration of the spirit. God wants His children to refer to Jesus as "Lord, Lord" and to prophesy, cast out devils, and perform many miracles, but not with the exclusion of obedience.

Jesus closes this great teaching with a very vivid, easy to understand illustration.

Matthew 7:21-29

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

"And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

"The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

In the course of our lives, many floods and winds will come up against us, but if our house is built upon the rock of obedience, we will weather all the storms. What Jesus presented in this excellent teaching is the outline for superior living, which by all means we are able to do with the help of God. As we walk, God and our Lord will help us. Sinless perfection is not our aim, nor is it attainable; but loving obedience so that our God may be glorified is achievable. We know from the teaching on prayer that each day we need to ask God for forgiveness (which implies each day we sin). However, as we persist to maintain this Kingdom bound behavior, the grace and mercy of God will lead us into the coming Kingdom. Perhaps, this life and our walk with God now are training for our lives in the age to come.