

Lesson 158 - Obedience Is Not an Option

Many Christians think the word "obedience" and "obey" are bad words. They also think that as long as a person believes, they are saved and no amount of obedience or disobedience can change that. If that were the case, then that would nullify many verses of the Bible, specifically in the New Testament alone.

1. What is Jesus to only those that live in obedience? **Hebrews 5:9**

EGW: Through the victory of Christ the same advantages that he had are provided for man; for he may be a partaker of a power out of and above himself, even a partaker of the divine nature, by which he may overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust. In human nature Christ developed a perfect character. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; tho he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." {ST, January 16, 1896 par. 6}

2. What are we expected to obey and not just accept or even just believe? **Romans 10:16, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17**

EGW: A terrible doom awaits the sinner, and therefore it is necessary that we know what sin is, in order that we may escape from its power. John says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." Here we have the true definition of sin; it is "the transgression of the law." How often the sinner is urged to leave his sins, and come to Jesus; but has the messenger who would lead him to Christ clearly pointed out the way? Has he clearly pointed out the fact that "sin is the transgression of the law," and that he must repent, and forsake the breaking of God's commandments? Christ will come to consume the false prophet, to sweep away the hosts of apostasy, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of God; and it is of the highest importance to each one of us that we know the conditions by which we shall escape the sinner's doom. It is of the greatest moment that we understand the nature of our fall and the consequences of transgression. Man's conscience has become hardened by sin, and his understanding darkened by transgression, and his judgment has become confused as to what is sin.

He has become benumbed by the influence of iniquity, and it is essential that his conscience be aroused to understand that sin is the transgression of God's holy law. He who does not obey the commandments of God is a sinner in the sight of God. {ST, June 20, 1895 par. 5}

3. What is the gospel? **Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:5**

EGW: With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit's power we could, become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy-seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. We would take it by force, as did Jacob. Then our message would be the power of God unto salvation. Our supplications would be full of earnestness, full of a sense of our great need; and we would not be denied. The truth would be expressed by life and character, and by lips touched with the living coal from off God's altar. When this experience is ours, we shall be lifted out of our poor, cheap selves, that we have cherished so tenderly. We shall empty our hearts of the corroding power of selfishness, and shall be filled with praise and gratitude to God. We shall magnify the Lord, the God of all grace, who has magnified Christ. And he will reveal his power through us, making us as sharp sickles in the harvest-field. {RH, February 14, 1899 par. 13}

4. What do most Christians do with that power? **2 Timothy 3:5**

EGW: It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy,—the beast. Said Paul, There shall “come a falling away, . . . and that man of sin be revealed.” [2 Thessalonians 2:3] So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast. And the Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord there will exist a state of religious declension similar to that in the first centuries. “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” [2 Timothy 3:1-5] “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” [1 Timothy 4:1.] Satan will work “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.” And all that “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” will be left to accept “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” [2 Thessalonians 2:9-11.] When this state of ungodliness shall be reached, the same results will follow as in the first centuries. {GC88

5. What two things does the power pertain towards? **2 Peter 1:3**

EGW: There is a possibility of the believer in Christ obtaining an experience that will be wholly sufficient to place him in right relation to God. Every promise that is in God's Book holds out to us the encouragement that we may be partakers of the divine nature. This is the possibility -- to rely upon God, to believe his Word, to work his works; and this we can do when we lay hold of the divinity of Christ. This possibility is worth more to us than all the riches in the world. There is nothing on earth that can compare with it. As we lay hold of the power thus placed within our reach, we receive a hope so strong that we can rely wholly upon God's promises; and laying hold of the possibilities there are in Christ, we become the sons and daughters of God. {RH, January 14, 1909 par. 2}

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you," the apostle says, "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." {RH, January 14, 1909 par. 3}

We are to be partakers of knowledge. As I have seen pictures representing Satan coming to Christ in the wilderness of temptation in the form of a hideous monster, I have thought, How little the artists knew of the Bible! Before his fall, Satan was, next to Christ, the highest angel in heaven. How foolish, then, to suppose that he approached Christ in the wilderness in any such form as is given him in the illustration "The Game of Life." Some here have seen that picture. After the Saviour had fasted forty days and forty nights, "he was afterward an hungered." Then it was that Satan appeared to him. He came as a beautiful angel from heaven, claiming that he had a commission from God to declare the Saviour's fast at an end. "If thou be the Son of God," he said, "command that these stones be made bread." But in Satan's insinuation of distrust, Christ recognized the enemy whose power he had come to the earth to resist. He would not accept the challenge, nor be moved by the temptation. He stood firmly to the affirmative. "Man shall not live by bread alone," he said, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." {RH, January 14, 1909 par. 4}

Christ stood by every word of God, and he prevailed. If we would always take such a position as this when tempted, refusing to dally with temptation or argue with the enemy, the same experience would be ours. It is when we stop to reason with the devil, that we are overcome. It is for us to know individually that we are right in the warfare, to take the affirmative in the sight of God, and there to stand. It is thus that we obtain the divine power promised, through which we obtain "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and

virtue." {RH, January 14, 1909 par. 5}

6. What does the power help us escape? **2 Peter 1:4**

EGW: We have great victories to gain, and a heaven to lose if we do not gain them. The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and the end thereof is death. Nothing but the life-giving influences of the gospel can help the soul. Pray that the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit, with all their quickening, recuperative, and transforming power, may fall like an electric shock on the palsy-stricken soul, causing every nerve to thrill with new life, restoring the whole man from his dead, earthly, sensual state to spiritual soundness. You will thus become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and in your souls will be reflected the image of Him by whose stripes you are healed. {5T 267.2}

7. Since we are given the power even of those things that is drawn by our strong desires for, which is called lusts according to 2 Peter 1:4, what are we to cease doing towards those lusts? **Romans 6:12, 1 Peter 1:14**

EGW: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it, in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:12, 13. Professed Christians, if there is no further light given you than that contained in this text, you will be without excuse if you suffer yourselves to be controlled by base passions. The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind. And it can be understood by those who have any wish to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some of those who profess to make the word of God their study, are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. But in order to leave men and women without excuse, God has given plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them to the word they have neglected to follow. Yet all the light is turned from by those who serve their own lusts, and they will not cease their course of sin, but continue to take pleasure in unrighteousness, in the face of the threatenings and vengeance of God against those who do such things. {SA 146.1}

8. What two choices do we have in how we conduct ourselves? **Romans 6:16 [Do not answer with the results.]**

EGW: Very many who profess to be servants of Christ are none of His. They are deceiving their souls to their own destruction. While they profess to be servants of Christ, they are not living in obedience to His will. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Many, while professing to be servants of Christ, are obeying another master, working daily against the Master whom they profess to serve. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." {2T 442.1}

9. What are the two results of being the servant of one or the other? **Romans 6:16**

EGW: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." [Romans 6:23.] While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. The penalty threatened is not merely temporal death, for all must suffer this. It is the second death, the opposite of everlasting life. God cannot save the sinner in his sins; but he declares that the wicked, having suffered the punishment of their guilt, shall be as though they had not been. Says an inspired writer, "Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." [Psalm 37:10.] In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon all mankind. All alike go down into the grave. But through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. Then those who have not secured the pardon of their sins must receive the penalty of transgression. They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity according to their works, but finally ending in the second death. Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion. {4SP 364.2}

10. What are born-again Christians expected to obey? **1 Peter 1:22-23**

EGW: It is time for us to practice the truth we claim to believe. It is time for us to lie as clay in the hands of the potter, that we may be made vessels unto honor. Our former habits, which are termed "lusts in our ignorance," must pass away, and grace and truth must make us peaceable, kind, and courteous, in thought, word, and action. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Hereditary and cultivated tendencies are no longer to control us, but we are to be under the control of Christ. "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned

love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." {RH, June 12, 1894 par. 6}

11. By what means are we exposed to the truth leading us to be obeying it? **1 Peter 1:23, John 17:17**

EGW: In no other way can Christ's disciples be cleansed but by obedience to the truth. The apostle Paul writes: "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." And Peter writes: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." {RH, September 18, 1900 par. 10}

12. Who are we to submit ourselves to when they are watching for our souls, which also includes children towards their parents, teachers, etc.? **Hebrews 13:17**

EGW: It is an extremely delicate thing to tell people of their faults. The reprover is likely to find that in those reproved, pride and stubbornness assert themselves, and the will is arrayed in defiance and opposition. But for all this, advice should be given, and faults should be laid bare. Let the young cultivate a teachable spirit, that they may be benefited by the efforts of those who seek to help them. You may feel that you are doing your best, and that you have been reproved for very trifling matters, and you may be impatient that any one should feel it his duty to reprove you for such small matters; but this is the injunction given by the apostle: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for this is unprofitable for you." These specific directions would not have been given, unless there were those who needed reproof and counsel. {YI, August 31, 1893 par. 4}

13. When children do obey their parents, in the Lord, what is it towards God? **Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20**

EGW: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the [new] earth." Children who dishonor their parents, and disobey them, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new. The purified new earth will be no place for the rebellious, the disobedient, the unthankful, ungrateful son or daughter. Unless such learn obedience and submission here, they will never learn the lesson hereafter; and the peace of the ransomed will never be marred by the disobedient, unruly, unsubmissive children. No commandment-breaker can inherit the kingdom of heaven. Will all the youth please read the fifth commandment spoken by Jehovah from Sinai, and engraven with his own finger upon tables of stone. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." {RH, March 30, 1886 par. 1}

There are many passages of Scripture that are plain, instructing the young, showing them clearly the will of God concerning them. These plain teachings they must meet in the Judgment. Yet there is not one young man or woman in twenty who professes the present truth, who heeds these Bible teachings. They do not read the word of God enough to know its claims upon them, and yet these truths will judge them in the great day of God, when young and old will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. {RH, March 30, 1886 par. 2}

14. Who is an example of obedience even though he had no clue where he was going, showing us that we ought to obey God even if we do not have all of the answers of why? **Hebrews 11:8**

EGW: Many are unable to make definite plans for the future. Their life is unsettled. They cannot discern the outcome of affairs, and this often fills them with anxiety and unrest. Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life. We have not wisdom to plan our own lives. It is not for us to shape our future. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8. {MH 478.3}

15. What did Paul expect Christians to obey? **2 Thessalonians 3:14**

EGW: The name of the Lord is to be glorified in the virtuous, honest, godly character of those who

believe. If men walk humbly and prayerfully with God, co-operating with him in the work of salvation, righteousness will be the fruit they will bear. The apostle in his day regarded idleness as a sin, and those who indulge this evil today disgrace their profession, and bring reproach upon the gospel of Christ. Through their influence many are turned away from righteousness and truth. We are warned not to associate with those who by their course of action lay a stumbling-block in the way of others. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle," the apostle Paul says, "note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." If he refuses the admonitions of the Lord's servants, he will bring ruin upon himself, and must bear his own sin. {RH, March 13, 1900 par. 7}

16. In copying Jesus' example, how obedient ought we to be? **1 John 2:6, Philipians 2:8**

EGW: Jesus left his home in heaven, and came to this dark world to reach to the very depths of human woe, that He might save those who are ready to perish. He laid aside his glory in the heavenly courts above, clothed his divinity with humanity, and for our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. He came to the earth that was all seared and marred with sin; "and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He submitted to insult and mockery, that He might leave us a perfect example. When we are inclined to magnify our trials, to think we are having a hard time, we should look away from self to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." All this He endured that He might bring many sons and daughters to God, to present them before the universe as trophies of his victory. {BEcho, January 1, 1893 par. 2}

Will man take hold of this divine power which has been placed within his reach, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given example in his conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. Christ was a perfect overcomer; and we must be perfect, wanting nothing, without spot or blemish. {BEcho, January 1, 1893 par. 3}

17. What is to be brought into complete obedience to Christ? **2 Corinthians 10:5**

EGW: It is the special work of Satan in these last days to take possession of the minds of youth, to corrupt their thoughts, and inflame their passions, knowing that by thus doing he can lead them to moral pollution, and then all the noble faculties of the mind will become debased, and he can control them to suit his own purposes. All are free moral agents. And as such they must bring their thoughts to run in the right channel. Their meditations should be of that nature which will elevate their minds, and make Jesus and heaven the subjects of their thoughts. Here is a wide field in which the mind can safely range. If Satan seeks to divert the mind from this to low and sensual things, bring it back again, and place it on eternal things; and when the Lord sees the determined effort made to retain only pure thoughts, he will attract the mind, like the magnet, and purify the thoughts, and enable them to cleanse themselves from every secret sin. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The first work for those who would reform, is to purify the imagination. If the mind is led out in a vicious direction, it must be restrained to dwell only upon pure and elevated subjects. When tempted to yield to a corrupt imagination, then flee to the throne of grace and pray for strength from Heaven. In the strength of God the imagination can be restricted to dwell upon things which are pure and heavenly. {ApM 29.3}

18. What type of faith is to be exercised pointing to the fact that faith is not just in the mind but is something put into action and practiced? **Romans 16:25-27 [End of verse 26 is the answer]**

EGW: In the obedience of faith, Abraham had forsaken his native country--had turned away from the graves of his fathers and the home of his kindred. He had wandered as a stranger in the land of his inheritance. He had waited long for the birth of the promised heir. At the command of God he had sent away his son Ishmael. And now, when the child so long desired was entering upon manhood, and the patriarch seemed able to discern the fruition of his hopes, a trial greater than all others was before him. {PP 148.1}

19. What keyword shows that we do not continue to serve sin? **Romans 6:17**

EGW: Had you improved the light that has been given in Battle Creek, you would now be far in advance of what you are in the divine life. Both of you are vain and proud. You have not felt that you must give an account of your stewardship. You are accountable to God for all your privileges and for all the means which pass through your hands. You have sought your own pleasure and selfish gratification at the expense of conscience and the approval of God. You do not act like servants of Christ, who are responsible to the Saviour who has bought you with His own precious blood. "Know

ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." {3T 82.1}

You are professedly the servants of Christ. Do you then yield to Him ready and willing obedience? Do you earnestly inquire how you shall best please Him who has called you to be soldiers of the cross of Christ? Do you both lift the cross and glory in it? Answer these questions to God. All your acts, however secret you may think they have been, are open to your heavenly Father. Nothing is hidden, nothing covered. All your acts and the motives which prompt them are open to His sight. He has full knowledge of all your words and thoughts. It is your duty to control your thoughts. You will have to war against a vain imagination. You may think that there can be no sin in permitting your thoughts to run as they naturally would without restraint. But this is not so. You are responsible to God for the indulgence of vain thoughts; for from vain imaginations arises the committal of sins, the actual doing of those things upon which the mind has dwelt. Govern your thoughts, and it will then be much easier to govern your actions. Your thoughts need to be sanctified. {3T 82.2}

20. What is obeyed that was delivered even unto us? **Romans 6:17**

EGW: (no comment)

21. What is given unto those that obey God, which means that all who claim to have it while living in disobedience are liars? **Acts 5:32**

EGW: But Peter was converted, and then after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ when before the rulers, he boldly declared for Jesus, and charged the rulers with these words: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life." There Peter shows himself entirely a different man after his conversion than the self-confident, boasting Peter prior to his conversion. I presented before them the voice of the world, the enemies of Christ, saying to Christ's messengers, "Ye should not teach in this name" and "bring this Man's blood upon us." Did this threatening succeed? did it make cowards of the witnesses of Christ? No; they proclaimed the message given them of God; and they were shut up in prison, and God sent His angel to release them. The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth, and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." This voice from the heavenly angels was directly opposite to that voice from the authorities, and which should

they obey? "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." Then Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, pleaded in behalf of the apostles, and his words prevailed. Well, this is a little part of the words the Lord gave me to speak to the people. {TM 268.1}

22. What four things do those who obey unrighteousness receive? **Romans 2:8-9**

EGW: The present is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, awaiting the mandate of God to pour their vials of wrath upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance, for the Spirit of God is gradually withdrawing from the world. Satan is also mustering his forces of evil, going forth "unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world," to gather them under his banner, to be trained for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Satan is to make most powerful efforts for the mastery in the last great conflict. Fundamental principles will be brought out, and decisions made in regard to them. Skepticism is prevailing everywhere. Ungodliness abounds. The faith of individual members of the church will be tested as though there were not another person in the world. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God." We claim to have faith, but, oh, how feeble! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." "The haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in the day." {PH028 4.1}

23. When confronted with the choice of obeying, who shall we choose to obey? **Acts 5:29**

EGW: We have many noble examples of loyalty to the law in the history of the prophets and apostles, who endured imprisonment, torture, death itself, rather than break one of God's commands. Peter and John have left a record as heroic as any in the Gospel dispensation. When

called before the high priest, and commanded not to speak at all, nor to preach in the name of Jesus, they answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done." When they were called a second time before the council, the Jewish leaders asked them, saying, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." In this answer we have evidence that no human authority has a right to place us under obligation to claims which will cause us to disobey our rightful Sovereign, whose subjects we claim to be. {ST, June 5, 1901 par. 15}