



HAVE YOU OBEYED THE GOSPEL?

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You may have heard the gospel, and you may say you believe the gospel, but have you OBEYED the gospel?

Thanks for joining me today to open and learn from the word of God. Our study today centers on a vital question; a question you need to seriously and carefully consider and answer because your relationship to God and your eternal destiny depends upon the answer. Have you really OBEYED the gospel? I didn't make up that expression nor did any other person or religious organization. It is a bible expression, and the scriptures make it clear that it has very personal and eternal implications.

In the tenth chapter of Romans, Paul, the apostle, writes this beginning in verse 13: "For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

The gospel is to be preached; it is to be heard; it is to be believed; but Paul also says it is to be OBEYED! What does the phrase "obey the gospel" mean? What is the gospel and how does one become obedient to it? That will be the focus of our lesson today and as we study, be asking the question: HAVE I OBEYED THE GOSPEL?

The word gospel means "good news" and refers to the glad message of Jesus, the Christ. But what does that mean? What is the gospel? Paul succinctly states in 1 Corinthians the 15th chapter, beginning in verse 1: "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I

preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,” So, the gospel is the good news that Christ sacrificially died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, making it possible for us to be saved.

Paul said in Acts 20:24 that he was commissioned as an apostle to “testify of the gospel (good news) of the grace of God.” Quoting Isaiah, who prophesied of the Jews restoration after the Babylonian captivity, Paul in Romans 10:14 connects that promise to the present reign of Christ and the spiritual condition He has made possible for us by saying that He sent His apostles to preach the gospel of peace. In other words: the good news that Christ’s reign has brought peace to those who once were in bondage to wickedness. He calls it the “gospel of your salvation” in Ephesians 1:13. And many times the New Testament calls it the “gospel of the kingdom”. That means the good news of Christ’s reign in the hearts of men and over the everlasting, unconquerable kingdom that God has given to Him. The gospel certainly is good news! When Christ completed His personal work on earth, He dispatched His apostles to preach that gospel to all of mankind. The church continues to uphold and extend that message the apostles first published by, as Paul told the Philippians, “Holding forth the word of life.”

The gospel is not only good news for the world, but also good news for you. God not only wants to forgive you of your sins and for you to be reconciled to Him in a right relationship, but He also sent His Son, Christ Jesus, to die for your sins and raising Him up from death, He then seated Him upon His throne at His right hand and wants His Son to rule your heart and life and transform you by holiness into His spiritual likeness. That’s wonderful news and that news is for you and for me. But did you know that the gospel is not only news to be heard and believed, but the gospel message is also to be OBEYED? That’s right! The gospel has commands for the sinner who hears it to obey.

This may be surprising to some because of the dogma that has saturated the religious community throughout the past 500 years which states that since salvation is by grace through faith, (which it is) that it is unconditional, and the sinner has no obligation to obey anything to receive it. Strangely, though, most, except for those who espouse Universalism, believe that salvation is not automatically applied to a sinner but that it must be accepted or received. Most claim that one does so by simply believing the gospel. But even then, you are making salvation contingent upon belief and the scripture makes belief essential as well. “For by grace are you saved **through** faith”, said Paul in Ephesians 2:8. He also said that through Christ “we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 5:2)

So, can we agree right off the bat that salvation by grace is conditional? It is contingent upon faith! If not, we have a contradiction with these and other passages. The real question is, does this faith just mean a mental assent or does it contain more? What does it mean to “obey the gospel?” Have YOU obeyed the gospel? Now, the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, but Paul made it clear in more than one place that the gospel message is more than a statement of facts. It is a message that is to be obeyed or submitted to. How does one OBEY THE GOSPEL and is obeying the gospel the same thing as believing the gospel?

In Romans 10, Paul talks about the Jews to whom the gospel plan of salvation was first offered. Israel was the nation God had chosen as vessels of service to bring the Messiah and redemption for all the race into the world. They were not chosen for salvation but for service in God’s plan. This is the context of Romans chapters 9 through 11. Accordingly, since they were the chosen channel for the Christ to enter the world, they were the first to have the good news of salvation offered to them. Romans 1:16

says the gospel of Christ is God's power unto salvation unto the Jew first and then the Gentile. And though some Jews did come to accept the truth of Christ and obeyed the gospel, the nation, as a whole, did not. They rejected the Christ and then God broadened the scope of the gospel message to include all the peoples and nations of the world. Paul illustrates their rejection in Romans 10:13-16. Let's begin in verse 16. He concludes "But they have not all **obeyed the gospel**. For Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" Now, let's work our way back and see what he means by them not obeying the gospel. Notice, he says they have not obeyed the gospel because as Isaiah prophesied of them 700 years earlier, they did not believe the report. Well, what report? Look back at the prior verse, verse 15: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" So, notice, they did not OBEY the gospel because they did not believe the gospel when it was preached to them. Now, go back one more verse to verse 14: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" So, God sent preachers to them. (That is talking about the apostles Christ sent to reveal the plan of God beginning with the Jews on Pentecost.) He sent preachers to them to declare the glad tidings of the gospel of peace – a report they did not believe when they heard it – and because they did not believe that gospel, they did not obey it. Now, go back one MORE verse to verse 13 and read into verse 14: "For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." How then shall they CALL on Him in whom they have not believed?" Please, my dear friend, notice this! One must CALL upon the name of the Lord in order to be saved but calling on the name of the Lord and believing in the Lord are NOT the same thing! One cannot call on the name of the Lord WITHOUT believing in Him, Paul says. Believing in the Lord leads one TO CALL on the name of the Lord to be saved and only those who do believe CAN call on the name of the Lord, but they are not the same thing. Now then, what does it mean to CALL on the name of the Lord? If we can answer that, we can determine what Paul meant when he said they had not OBEYED the gospel! If a person calls on the name of the Lord, they will be saved. But they can't call on the name of the Lord until they believe in Him. They can't believe on Him until they've heard about Him. And they can't hear about Him until someone preaches or tells them the good news or glad tidings of Him. Well, the Jewish nation had heard the glad tidings of Jesus through the apostles whom God sent to preach it to them, but they didn't believe their preaching and since they DID NOT believe their preaching, they did not OBEY the GOSPEL. They did not, in other words, call on the name of the Lord, and therefore they rejected the gospel and were not saved.

So, how does one CALL on the name of the Lord? Some believe that that refers to saying what many call "the sinner's prayer"; that it means to audibly or silently cry out to Christ to save them or to verbally invite the Lord to come into your heart. That is, after all, the common practice of most denominational and community churches. They invite sinners to recite a simple prayer or to cry out to God to save them. But is that what "calling on the name of the Lord" means? No. This phrase actually comes from the Old Testament. It was used by Joel to prophesy of the beginning of the gospel age which began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Peter connects Joel's prophecy with what was occurring there that day as he first preached the gospel of the resurrected and enthroned Christ to the Jews. Notice, it doesn't say to "call unto the Lord" but rather to "call UPON the NAME of the Lord". It is the appeal that comes from the knowledge that only the Lord Jesus Christ has the power to save. We are availing ourselves of what Jesus Christ has the power to do and has offered to do. Do we do that by merely wafting a prayer up to heaven? Well, remember that Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

So, calling on the name of the Lord is more than verbally calling out to Christ. It involves some kind of obedience. Do you suppose we can find some example of one calling on the name of the Lord after

hearing and believing the gospel? Sure, we can! Read with me now from Acts 22:16. Saul of Taurus now believes that Jesus is the resurrected Lord. He wants to know what he must do. Christ sent him into the city to wait for the preacher to come tell him what he must do. So, Ananias comes to him and listen carefully to what he says. Saul, what are you waiting for? Pray this prayer with me and call upon the name of the Lord. Is that what he said? No, that doesn't work because Acts 9:11 tells us that after Saul met Christ but BEFORE Ananias came to him that Saul was praying. He was praying after meeting Christ, but he HAD not yet called on the name of the Lord! How do I know that? Because Ananias told him to call on the name of the Lord when he got there. So, what DOES it mean to call on the name of the Lord to be saved? Let's read Acts 22:16 correctly now. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Saul believed the moment he saw Christ on the Damascus Road, but he hadn't called on the name of the Lord and therefore, according to Romans 10:13 hadn't yet been saved. He had even been praying but he had not called on the name of the Lord to be saved. When did he call on the name of the Lord? When He arose and was baptized washing away his sins. That's what the bible plainly says! That's not what most preachers are saying though. Friend, I'll take what the word of God says over what 100,000 preacher say any day of the week and you should too. We call upon the name of the Lord when we obey the gospel we have heard and believed. There's more to it friend than just believing something in your mind and saying the prayer. Sinners were never told in the New Testament to pray for salvation. They were told to obey the gospel.

This agrees perfectly with what the bible says in other passages as well. Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21 that "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," Greek scholars point out that the word answer is actually an interrogative term, and it means an appeal for something. We appeal for the cleansed conscience – or we might say – we call upon the name of the Lord for forgiveness and salvation – when we, in faith, obey Christ's command to be baptized.

Now then, turn to Romans 6:17-18. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." They were slaves to sin, you see, but they were set free. When? What was the point Paul where Paul says their condition changed? He says, "yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine." Now, the word "form" means a mold or a likeness. Notice – they OBEYED something that was LIKE the doctrine or teaching they had first heard. What is the gospel teaching about salvation? In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul says the gospel whereby we are saved is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. So, Paul tells the Romans that they obeyed a likeness of the gospel and were then freed from sin. What does the bible tell a sinner to do that pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? Look back in verses 3 and 4: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Do you see the connection? Acts 6:7 "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." Romans 1:5, "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name."

My friend, don't listen to those who tell you baptism has nothing to do with a person being saved. They are teaching false doctrine – regardless of how popular it may be or good it may sound. Have you OBEYED the gospel? That's a question of great consequence. That's a question of ETERNAL consequence. Peter said in 1 Peter 4:17, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not **obey** the gospel of God?"

What will the end be of such people? Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, “and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,” Don’t be among that number, my friend. Believe the gospel but also OBEY the gospel by being immersed in water, into Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). When you do, you’ll be calling on the name of the Lord, and by His grace, He will save, and you can then continue your obedience to the gospel message by living for Him each day.

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