

78. BARRIERS TO OBEDIENCE

Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 15:1-35.

Key: Faith is tested in the life of a Christian when obedience seems hard. After we are saved, faith and works are very closely linked. All disobedience is due to lack of faith.

WHEN IS OBEDIENCE HARD?

1. Sacrifice: Obedience is hard, when you think you'll lose out in some way. For example, Abraham sacrificed Isaac, his only son, at God's command. Sacrifice was a barrier to obedience, but faith overcame the barrier. Examples for us today are things like:

Purity in dating. It is a sacrifice not to touch, but I Corinthians 7:1 says "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Tithing. It is a sacrifice to tithe 1/10 of our income to God, thinking that we can't afford it because we have too many bills. People don't tithe because they have not the faith to trust God to bless them for giving. "Give and it shall be given you....." Luke 6:38.

When Israel did not keep the Sabbath for 490 years, God got all His Sabbaths at once in the 70 year captivity. God also can and will get His tithes, even if we don't tithe. "All the tithe...is the Lord's." Leviticus 27:30.

2. Reason: Obedience is hard when obedience **seems unreasonable**.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and **my thoughts** than **your thoughts**." Isaiah 55:8,9.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5,6.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 14:12 "And be not conformed to this world, but be **ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2.

3. Peer Pressure: Obedience is hard when obedience means doing something that nobody else is doing **or** not doing something that everybody else is doing. For example, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego stood against the peer pressure of not bowing down to an image. They did this by faith. When a minority opposes a majority, peer pressure becomes an obstacle.

We all like to be liked, and therefore so many Christians compromise in order to be liked by the peer group. It takes someone with character to stand against the crowd. The majority is usually wrong. "Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Matthew 7:13.

4. Suffering: "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." Acts 7:54.

God wanted Stephen to preach the Gospel to the Jewish leaders. Stephen had to preach conviction of sin while he had the opportunity. This message made them very angry. Now someone may have advised Stephen to cut his message so that he didn't offend anyone, but then no one would have been convicted of sin and Saul may not have been

saved. Stephen could have said, "Now let's cool it, I didn't mean to offend you." Stephen looked at God through the circumstance of suffering and he obeyed God. Faith overcame suffering as a barrier to obedience.

For example, the Reformers were burned at the stake rather than compromise with Roman Catholic error. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29.

God gave Jeremiah a promise for his faith to grasp. "I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Jeremiah 1:18,19.

For every barrier you face, there are promises that we can grasp to climb the wall. Faith grasps the promise-handles on the wall. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." God proved faithful to Noah, Daniel, Jeremiah, the Reformers.....God's faithfulness helps us **overcome barriers to obedience**.