

San Juan Church of Christ

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What God's Word Says About...

Faith and Obedience

According to scripture faith MUST include obedience to the commandments of God. Paul wrote, "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith" (Romans 16:25-26). "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness" before the Law of Moses "so that he might be the father of ALL who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those [Jews that were circumcised according to the Law of Moses] who are not only of the circumcision. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants [all believers] that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4: 9-14). Abraham "did not waiver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised He was able also to perform. Therefore it was also credited to him [Abraham] as righteousness. Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Romans 4:20-24).

In the beginning Cain was not faithful to God (John: 8:44). The Hebrew writer said, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he [Abel] obtained the testimony that he was righteous" (Heb. 11:4). The apostle John wrote, "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:11-12). Because of Cain's unacceptable sacrifice to God, Cain became "angry and his countenance fell" allowing Satan to rule in his decision to murder his brother Abel whose sacrifice was acceptable to God (Gen. 4:4-8).

When ALL of Israel escaped the bondage of Egypt, "they passed through the sea [Red Sea], and ALL were baptized into Moses...and ALL ate the same spiritual food; and ALL drank the same spiritual drink... nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased" (1 Cor. 10:1-5). Why was God displeased with them? Because of their lack of faith and disobedience. Paul reminded us of the disobedience of the Israelites and warned those in Christ [Christians] that we could also fall if we disobey His commandments. "Now these things happened to them [Israelites] as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come [until the end of time]" (1 Cor: 10:11).

When God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the nation of Israel, He said, "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God and you will be My people; and you will walk in ALL the way which I command you, that it may be well with you. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward" (Jer. 7:23-24). Solomon wrote, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25).

Some examples of men who thought they had a better way than what God commanded them include: "Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who took their respective fire pans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1-2). God instructed Moses as to how the Ark of the Covenant was to be carried. "But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over its furnishings and all that belongs to it. They shall carry the

tabernacle and all its furnishings and they shall take care of it...Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman who comes near shall be put to death" (Num. 1:50-51). Many years later when King David sought to bring back the Ark of the Covenant from their enemy the Philistines, "They carried the Ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart" (1 Chron. 13:7). The Ark was to be carried by hand, not by any vehicle and was not to be touched by those carrying it (Num. 4:15). "When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the cart because the oxen nearly upset it. The anger of the Lord burned against Uzza so He struck him down because he put his hand out to the Ark; and he died there before God" (1 Chron. 13:9-10).

Examples of God's commandments and the results of man's OBEDIENCE to them include: Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 5:8-15. These examples seem strange to mankind but as we quoted previously from Proverbs, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25). Many false teachers today preach that you are saved before water baptism even though Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). On the day of Pentecost, the Jews asked the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter responded "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is to be done in this order! Peter also said, "that baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Who are we to argue with God and His commandments? Rather, we should have faith that leads to obedience!

Send questions, comments, or requests for a Bible study to: info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org