

TEACHING GOAL

To study the importance of obedience.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. What is the duty which God requires of man?

A. The duty which God requires of man, is obedience to His revealed will.

S.C. 39, L.C. 90 W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 74-75

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Luke 11:27-28

Support Passages: John 3:36, 14:15, I John 2:3-4, Acts 5:29,
Romans 13:1-7, II Thessalonians 1:6-10,
Hebrews 13:17

BIBLE STORY

I Samuel 15: Saul's disobedience and its consequences.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"-- Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. --" (1 Samuel 15:22-23, ESV)

APPLICATION

We must obey God's laws regardless of the consequences brought.

SUMMARY

It was a simple order, carried out at considerable effort, but easily understood. "And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'" (1 Samuel 15:18, ESV) Saul did not do this. He spared Agag the king of the Amalekites and the soldiers took spoils, sheep and oxen and the choicest of the things that were all to be destroyed. The results were devastating to Saul, king of Israel. Almighty God was now hostile to Saul and we may learn from this that, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams". No one can glorify God, which is man's chief end, with disobedience and we certainly will not enjoy Him if He is our enemy.

Obedience to God is our first priority. Love for God and our neighbor is based upon it and obedience to any other authority is secondary to it. However, love for God and our neighbor appear to present a great problem to many people. Many do not seem to understand the true nature of love. Is it simply a feeling of felicity or gratitude? Of course, toward God we may indeed have such feeling as a child would towards his father; however, the basis of all love is commandment keeping. John states, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3, ESV) And Jesus states, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15, ESV)

As we have observed with Saul, the consequences of disobedience are terrible. Jesus tells us, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36, ESV) Thus Jesus equates belief with obedience and from this we clearly understand that man's first priority is obedience to God.

In His sovereign providence, God has delegated certain authority to mankind and we are to obey this authority.¹ The Elders of a particular church are to be obeyed and likewise civil authorities are to be obeyed.² What is contemplated here is the authority that God has in fact delegated to human beings some of whom are just and others unjust. He who is a godly Elder meets the requirements set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and one who is a righteous civil servant meets the requirements set forth in Romans 13:1-7. This latter text teaches that righteous governing authorities are those who reward keepers of God's commandments and punish those who disobey God's commandments. All other authorities are more or less unrighteous or evil. We must understand that God has complete sovereignty over tyrants and Satan, however, Satan and tyrants are not "a cause of fear for good behavior" and they are not "a servant of God to us for good!"

These usurpers only promote evil and if we do evil we will have no fear of punishment from Satan or from unrighteous demigods! Wicked kings (Isaiah 10)

¹ Hebrews 13:17

² Romans 13:1

are often used by God to bring justice to a sinning nation nevertheless we are to obey every human institution for the Lord's sake (or because of the Lord)³. However, given that the Lord is perfectly righteous, human institutions that require us to do evil do not comport with the reason given for obedience, namely, because of the Lord or "for the Lord's sake".

The apostles spent much time in prison because they "obeyed God rather than men"⁴ their highest authority being the law of God. An interesting situation developed in Thessalonica⁵ where Paul was reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue there. Out of jealousy, the Jews dragged Jason and other Christians before the civil authorities where they were charged with treason. Paul, Jason and the others were indeed saying, "there is another King, Jesus!"⁶ The implication is, of course, that God's law is higher than that of Caesar's.

The Christian has no other choice than to obey the laws of God. The consequences of disobedience are unthinkable. We must obey the laws of God regardless of the penalty imposed by an ungodly government or other enemies of King Jesus.

³ I Peter 2:13

⁴ Acts 5:29

⁵ Acts 17:1ff

⁶ Acts 17:7