

OBEDIENCE

Series: “7 Spiritually Healthy Habits”

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INTRODUCTION:

Ron Dentinger warns: *“Health care is getting far too expensive. I just got a prescription. The instructions read: ‘Take one every time you can afford it.’”* The prescriptions for getting spiritually healthy can be quite costly as well. But *not* paying for it, will be far more costly!

This cost is our second Spiritually Healthy Habit: Obedience. Yes, obedience can be a big, difficult and sometimes bitter-tasting bill to for us to swallow. It costs us, sometimes richly, in pride, preference, personal control and self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary if we are to maintain our spiritual health and the cost of refusing it is far greater!

Please, do not take my word for it, but do heed God's Holy Word!

SCRIPTURE:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 *When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.*

1 Samuel 15:22-23 *Then Samuel said: Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king.*

Proverbs 3:1-8 *My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being. Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will find favor and high regard in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.*

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 *Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly, or box like one who beats the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

PRAYER

HEALTHY OBEDIENCE IS:

1.) LIVING FOR MY MASTER

- We ALL, according to human nature, must live for and according to the direction of someone.
- Like it or not, we ALL have a Master to whom we are bound.
- The question, then, is who is YOUR Master? Really?
- Is the answer of your lips the same as that of your decisions and actions?

Romans 6:15-18 *What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not! Do you not know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey--either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were entrusted to, and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.*

- **Illustration:** An officer had received his orders from the Duke of Wellington. The officer protested, believing it impossible to execute his orders. Wellington replied: "I did not ask your opinion; I gave you my orders, and expect them to be obeyed." In the same way, implicit obedience is required of every soldier of Christ. As the classic poem proclaims:
"Ours not to reason why;
Ours not to make reply;
Ours but to do or die."
- **The true sign of allegiance is obedience!**

Acts 5:29 *But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men.*

- *Who are we really living for? According to whose rules? Whose preferences? Whose attention and favor?*
- The excuse of legalism: We have re-defined the Biblical concept in order to suit our own desires and proudly hold it aloft as a false justification for our own willfulness. We have determined in our own deceitful hearts that any accountable expectation is 'legalism.' That is a far stretch from God's Word which teaches that we are all to strive to meet all of God's standards of holiness. The legalism condemned in Scripture refers to either (a) the need for perfect obedience and sinlessness to earn salvation and/or (b) imposed laws of men that go beyond or different from Scripture.

2.) LEARNED THROUGH SUFFERING

- As we mentioned in the beginning, obedience is costly. Sustained, faithful obedience in all times and circumstances can only be learned and developed through suffering.
- When we put it all on the line, when we aren't certain what will happen next, or when we know that our obedience will result in some form of pain, rejection or disappointment; THAT is when our true character and allegiance shines through.
- None of us should consider ourselves exempt from this rule. Even Jesus embraced it in very real physical and emotional ways!

Hebrews 5:7-9 *During His earthly life, He offered prayers and appeals, with loud cries and tears, to the One who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Though a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.*

After He was perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

- *Have WE accepted righteous suffering as a necessary and worthwhile cost of obedience?*

3.) **REQUIRES DEATH TO SELF**

- To serve another, we cannot serve ourselves.
- To have life in another, we must die to our selves. Even Jesus did this!

Philippians 2:8-9 *He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death-- even to death on a cross. For this reason God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name,*

- So, it must be also for us IF we are to have the blessing of eternal life in Him!

Galatians 2:19-21 *For through the law I have died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.*

- We die to self and live in Christ when we absolutely accept and unquestionably live by His Will and His Word rather than accordingly to our own reasoning, desires or feelings!

Romans 7:12-25 *So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good . . . For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am made out of flesh, sold into sin's power . . . For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it . . . For in my inner self I joyfully agree with God's law. But I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh, to the law of sin.*

Illustration: In good times or bad, easy or difficult faithful obedience to God is our strength and our salvation. Several years ago, a TV news camera crew was on assignment in southern Florida filming the widespread destruction of Hurricane Andrew.

In one scene, amid the devastation and debris stood one house on its foundation. The owner was cleaning up the yard when a reporter approached him.

“Sir, why is your house the only one still standing?” asked the reporter. “How did you manage to escape the severe damage of the hurricane?”

“I built this house myself,” the man replied. “I also built it according to the Florida state building code. When the code called for 2 x 6 roof trusses, I used 2 x 6 roof trusses. I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane. I did, and it did. I suppose no one else around here followed the code.”

When the sun is shining and the skies are blue, building our lives on something other than the guidelines in God's Word can be tempting. But there's only one way to be ready for a storm.

Romans 8:12-14 *So then, brothers, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit*

you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.

- This death to self and life in Christ is not simply a one-time event. It is something which we must face and choose at every point of decision. *How are we doing?*

4.) STRIVES FOR HOLINESS

- Healthy obedience is not just a matter of blind or purposeless following. Rather, it is an intentional, personal striving for holiness.
- A holiness that can be found and attained only through conformity to the Will and Image of Jesus Christ!

1 Peter 1:14-17 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance but, as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during this time of temporary residence.

2 Peter 2:18-22 For uttering bombastic, empty words, they seduce, by fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, since people are enslaved to whatever defeats them. For if, having escaped the world's impurity through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in these things and defeated, the last state is worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to its own vomit, and, a sow, after washing itself, wallows in the mud.

- *How much do you think about or intentionally strive for holiness?*
- *When deciding who or what to obey in any given situation, how much thought or prayer is given toward the impact your decision will have upon your growth toward holiness?*

HONORING OBEDIENCE: COMMUNION

Nothing better symbolizes the importance and value Christ places upon the spiritual discipline of obedience than the institution of the Lord's Supper. Similarly, circumspectly remembering and honoring Him in this way is a beautiful opportunity for us to accept and commit to such a life before Him as our Master.