

Romans Part 36 – Chapter 11

Sunday, January 8, 2023

With input from <https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/11>: Fairchild, Mary. "Why Is Obedience to God Important?" Learn Religions, Aug. 28, 2020, [learnreligions.com/obedience-to-god-701962](https://www.learnreligions.com/obedience-to-god-701962): John MacArthur; Benjamin Moore; Heather Cofer

1 John 4:7-10: *Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Review

In part 35 we reviewed the entire story of Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal and Jezebel, mentioned by Paul here in Romans 11:2-4, and Elijah's conclusion of "*Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.*"

But we saw that Elijah's conclusion was incorrect by the text in 1 Kings 19 and in Romans 11:

1 Kings 19:15 & 18

15 *The Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus...*

18 *Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.*"

Romans 11:4-17:

4 *But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

Paul restates what grace means. He wants to dispel any notion that any Israelites stand with God because of their own works.

We also noted that Paul ended chapter 10 with verses 20 & 21 with the condemnation that Israel has been a "*disobedient and obstinate people*":

Romans 10:20-21:

And Isaiah is very bold and says,

"I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I REVEALED MYSELF TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME."

²¹ But as for Israel, He says, "I HAVE SPREAD OUT MY HANDS ALL DAY LONG TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

And, we ended with these thoughts:

The root cause of all unbelief is a deliberate choice to disobey, reject, or ignore what God has told us:

Romans 1:18–20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth [m]in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident [n]within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

John 5:39–40: *You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me; 40 and yet you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.*

Israel has rejected the messiah:

John 7:17: *If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God, or I am speaking from Myself.*

We recalled Stephen's last words before he was stoned from **Acts 7:51-53:** *“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*

This is a good place to recognize that our effort to obey God without trusting and believing in Him, and His son Jesus, is useless but obeying Him after we have trusted Him for our salvation is now vital:

Perhaps the best way to look at the difference between God's work at salvation and our work of obedience after salvation is Paul's conversion itself when:

Acts 9:17-18: *So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately something like fish scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;*

Psalms 19:8: *“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes”*

Obedience to the Word is the hallmark of a true believer.

It isn't popular these days to speak of God's Word as a book of commandments. Commands imply law and we're accustomed to grace. But the fact is, both the Old and New Testaments contain many commandments that all God's people are to obey.

The apostle John said, *“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected”* (1 John 2:3-5). John equated the commandments of God with the Word of God.

Jesus Himself said, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (John 14:15) and *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father”* (v. 21). If you truly love Christ, your life will be characterized by a pattern of obedience to His Word. Shallow rule following doesn't produce good fruit. Taking the commands found in the bible and making them into a checklist and then checking the twice doesn't please Jesus.

Jesus made it clear that command following comes after love.

The key word is “if”.

In other words, if you have come to see Jesus in light of His infinite worth and cherish Him more than anything in the world, then you will joyfully obey.

Every commandment of God is “pure”, the psalmist said (Ps. 19:8). Its effect is “*enlightening the eyes.*” God’s Word brings spiritual truth into clear focus. Not every passage of Scripture is easy to understand, but taken as a whole, the message of the Bible is clear to the regenerate mind.

But as clear as the Bible is to believers, unredeemed people can’t understand it. To them it’s foolishness because their minds are unenlightened (1 Cor. 2:14). In their spiritual blindness they choose humanistic philosophical speculations over God’s Word. But as a believer, you are continually being enlightened by the truths of God’s Word as the Holy Spirit enables you to understand and apply them to your life.

Your ability to understand the Word is a priceless gift. Take advantage of it daily by expanding your Bible knowledge and increasing your obedience.

8 Reasons Why Obedience to God Is Important

1. Jesus Calls Us to Obey

In Jesus Christ, we find the perfect model of obedience. As his disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love: *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* (John 14:15, ESV)

2. Obedience Is an Act of Worship

While the Bible places a strong emphasis on obedience, it's critical to remember that believers are not justified (made righteous) by obedience. Salvation is a free gift of God, and we can do nothing to merit it. True Christian obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord:

Romans 12:1: *Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

3. God Rewards Obedience

Over and over again we read in the Bible that God blesses and rewards obedience:

Genesis 22:18: *"And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."*

Luke 11:28: *Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice."*

James 1:22-25: *But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

4. Obedience to God Proves Our Love

The books of 1 and 2 John clearly explain that obedience to God demonstrates love for God. Loving God implies following his commands:

1 John 5:2–3: *By this **we know** that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*

2 John 6: *And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you are to walk in it.*

5. Obedience to God Demonstrates Faith

When we obey God, we show our trust and faith in him:

And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (1 John 2:3–6, NLT)

6. Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

The phrase "obedience is better than sacrifice," has often perplexed Christians. It can only be understood from an Old Testament perspective. The law required the Israelite people to offer sacrifices to God, but those sacrifices and offerings were never intended to take the place of obedience.

1 Samuel 15:22–23: *But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."*

7. Disobedience Leads to Sin and Death

The disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world. This is the basis of the term "original sin." But Christ's perfect obedience restores fellowship with God for everyone who believes in him:

For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19, ESV)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22, ESV)

8. Through Obedience, We Experience the Blessings of Holy Living

Only Jesus Christ is perfect, therefore, only he could walk in sinless, perfect obedience. But as we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from within, we grow in holiness (the process of sanctification) which can also be described as spiritual growth. The more we read God's Word, spend time with Jesus, and allow the Holy Spirit to change us from within, the more we grow in obedience and holiness as Christians:

Psalm 119:198:

*Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the Law of the Lord.*

2 Blessed are those who comply with His testimonies,

And seek Him with all their heart.

3 They also do no injustice;

They walk in His ways.

4 You have ordained Your precepts,

That we are to keep them diligently.

5 Oh that my ways may be established

To keep Your statutes!

6 Then I will not be ashamed

When I look at all Your commandments.

7 I will give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,

When I learn Your righteous judgments.

8 I will keep Your statutes;

Do not utterly abandon me!

2 Corinthians 7:1: *Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.*

The verse above says, "Let us work toward complete holiness." We don't learn obedience overnight; it's a lifelong process that we pursue by making it a daily goal.

Heather Cofer: *A quote I had heard by Elisabeth Elliot came to mind, "A whole lot of what we call 'struggling' is simply delayed obedience."*

I could think back on the many times I had known exactly what obedience to the Lord was supposed to look like, yet tried to find some "clever" way of getting myself out of it, not realizing all the while that I was creating far more difficulty for myself than if I had just quickly obeyed in the first place. Somehow, I thought that my way would be better than God's way. I might not have said so with my words, but my actions were what proved it. And the outcome of disobedience has never been good fruit, no matter how much it "made sense" at the time.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who were faced with the choice to obey God, but chose their own way instead. Abraham took Sarah's advice rather than waiting on God for a son (see Genesis 16); Moses struck a rock instead of speaking to it as he was commanded (see Numbers 20:11); Jonah boarded a boat to Tarshish after God asked him to go to Nineveh (see Jonah 1:2-3). And those are just a few of the many examples.

And what was the result in each of these instances of disobedience? Hard consequences — sad consequences. All because they didn't do what God was asking, but God always has a reason for asking certain things, and His ways are always best. As Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," saith the LORD " (KJV).

I'm sure all of these people had — in their minds — seemingly legitimate ways of justifying why their course of action was better than God's, just like any of us do when we are trying to find some way out of obedience. Maybe His way seems too hard, too complicated, too scary, will make us look strange, or downright doesn't make sense. But the problem with every one of these things is a focus on ourselves rather than God. I know better, I can figure out an easier way, I don't want to look silly. A true heart of obedience doesn't look for excuses. Instead, its disposition is, "No matter how difficult it is, no matter

how little sense it makes to me, and no matter how much I might lose, I will do anything You ask of me because I love You.”

When we look back through history, we can see countless evidences that there is nothing outside of His control. Despite the innumerable sins that have been committed, through tragedies and disasters, God still displays His love, faithfulness, power, and sovereignty, and works “all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

When God asks something of us, it is always for our good and for His glory. When we choose not to obey, we are actually depriving ourselves of blessing and of being a part of something that could be a testimony of His awe-inspiring greatness. No matter what obedience might cost us, it is nothing compared to the prize that awaits us in eternity.

Our ultimate example of obedience is Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 5:8-9 *“Although he [Jesus] was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...”* (ESV).