“Come, Let Us Reason Together” About the Bible
What Is Salvation?
Bible Study Series

“Come now, and let us reason together,” *Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

LESSON SEVEN — Is Salvation By Obedience?

Estimated Reading Time: 9 - 10 minutes

Most people don’t like the word **obedience**.

When you hear it, you might think of **rules**, **authority**, or **having to do something you don’t want to do**. For a lot of people, obedience sounds like restriction, not freedom.

But obedience is something you expect in everyday life.

A parent wants obedience from their child, not just for control, but for safety and love. A coach expects obedience from players because success comes through listening and acting on instruction. In the workplace, a boss expects employees to follow through on direction. Laws of the land expect obedience to them by its citizens. Obedience is part of order, trust, and respect.

When **obedience is referenced in the Bible**, you need to recognize that it’s not about being forced. Rather, it’s about **responding to God with reverence, trust, and submission**.

Look at what the Bible really says about obedience. What does it mean? Why does it matter? Is salvation acquired through obedience?

What Is Obedience?

At its most basic level, **obedience means doing what someone in authority says**. It’s compliance. But in the Bible, obedience is more than just outward action as it is to come from the heart.

It means hearing God’s Word, trusting His will, and submitting your own desires to His commands.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for obedience (*shama*) literally means **“to hear with attention”** or **“to listen and respond.”** In the New Testament, the Greek word (*hypakouo*) carries the same idea: **“to listen under”** or **“to heed.”**

In other words, **obedience is not accidental, it’s intentional**. It’s hearing God’s Word and responding with humble action.

Obedience in the Old Testament

The Old Testament repeatedly emphasizes that obedience to God is **central** to righteousness.

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God… that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. (Deuteronomy 28:1)

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

God wanted more than rituals. He expected hearts that listened and followed Hiscommandments.

Here some examples:

Noah

"Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." (Genesis 6:22)

Noah was saved, not by faith alone, but by obedient **faith**. He built the ark exactly as God instructed. His obedience was the key to his salvation.

Abraham

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out… and he went out, not knowing where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8)

"Because you have obeyed My voice…" (Genesis 22:18)

Abraham's faith was **demonstrated by obedience**. He left his home. He was willing to offer Isaac. His righteousness came from **trusting and obeying**.

Moses

"Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did." (Exodus 40:16)

Moses was God's servant because he **obeyed,** whether delivering the Law, confronting Pharaoh, or leading the people. When he failed to obey (Numbers 20:12), even he suffered consequences.

God's relationship with Israel was built on obedience to His covenant:

"And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments… I will give you the rain for your land in its season…" **(Deuteronomy 11:13–14)**

Obedience was always connected to **blessing**, **righteousness**, and **salvation**.

What Jesus Taught About Obedience

Jesus never separated love for God from obedience to Him.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

Faith without obedience is meaningless. Jesus didn't come to abolish obedience. Instead He came to **fulfill it** and **teach it rightly**.

"Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man..." (Matthew 7:24)

Jesus modeled perfect obedience:

"I always do those things that please Him." (John 8:29)

"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." (Hebrews 5:8)

Jesus didn't just teach obedience. **He lived it**. Even His suffering was part of fulfilling the Father's will.

Obedience in the New Testament Epistles

The apostles continually emphasized obedience is an essential part to receiving salvation, that it is not optional.

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves... whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"
(Romans 6:16)

"...when God will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who... seek for glory, honor, and immortality." (Romans 2:6–7)

"...when He comes in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel..." (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

Obedience is what separates those who receive eternal life from those who face eternal destruction.

The Apostle Peter also writes:

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..." (1 Peter 1:22)

You are purified—cleansed—by obedience to the truth.

And in Hebrews, the saved are described as those who **obey**:

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9)

Obedience is not an option because it is **required** for salvation.

Obedience Alone Does Not Save

Now, here's where you need balance. **Obedience alone does not save.** A person can do all the right things outwardly but have a heart far from God.

"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8)

Salvation is not earned by perfect law-keeping or outward behavior. It takes:

- **Grace** (Ephesians 2:8)
- **Mercy** (Titus 3:5)
- **Faith** (Hebrews 11:6)
- **Works** (James 2:24)
- **Obedience** (Hebrews 5:9)

These are not in conflict, rather they **work together**. True faith **obeys**, grace makes obedience **possible**, and mercy forgives your **failures**. **But what does obedience do?**

Obedience plays a vital, cooperative role in the process of salvation. Specifically:

What does obedience do?

➡️ **Obedience demonstrates true faith**: It is the **evidence** that faith is genuine. *"True faith obeys."*

> ***"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*** (James 2:18)
>
> ***"By faith Abraham obeyed…"*** (Hebrews 11:8)
>
> These passages show that faith that immediately results in obedient action is an ineffective and incomplete faith.

➡️ **Obedience is the human response to God's grace**: Grace makes salvation possible, but **obedience is how you respond** to that grace.

> Grace makes salvation possible, but obedience is how you respond to that grace.
>
> ***"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."*** (2 Corinthians 6:1)

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness… we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." (Titus 2:11–12)

God's grace requires a response that is demonstrated by obedient, godly living as it is not a passive belief.

➡️ **Obedience is essential to receiving salvation**: Christ is *"the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9)

This is a direct statement affirming that obedience is required for salvation. Jesus saves **those who obey Him**.

➡️ **Obedience cooperates with grace, mercy, faith, and worksB:** It does not replace or override them—it completes them.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith… not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works…" (Ephesians 2:8–10)

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24)

These passages show that salvation involves grace, faith, and works. **Obedience brings them together** in the life of a believer.

Obedience is the active response of faith to God's grace and mercy, making it essential though not exclusive, in the process of being justified and saved.

…Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22)

Obedience is the **active expression of faith** by doing what God says in response to His grace.

Jesus Christ – The Culmination of Obedience

The ultimate example of obedience is **Jesus Christ**.

"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8)

Jesus didn't just talk about submission to the Father. **He lived it all the way to the cross**. Because of His obedience, salvation became possible.

"By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

If Jesus had not obeyed, you could not be saved. His perfect obedience fulfilled the Law, satisfied justice, and opened the way for you to be reconciled to God. Consider these scriptures:

📖 ***"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*** *(*Philippians 2:8)

Christ's obedience, even in suffering and death, was essential to His redemptive work.

📖 ***"For as by one man's disobedience many are made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."*** *(*Romans 5:19)

This verse contrasts Adam's disobedience with **Christ's obedience** which brings righteousness to those who are in Him.

📖 ***"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."*** *(*Matthew 5:17)

Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly through His **obedient life**, meeting all its righteous requirements.

📖 ***"By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."*** (Isaiah 53:11)

This prophetic verse connects Christ's obedience and suffering to the **justification** of sinners.

📖 ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** *(*2 Corinthians 5:21)

Jesus' obedient sacrifice **satisfied God's justice**, making reconciliation with God possible.

These scriptures collectively affirm that **without Jesus' obedience**, there would be **no fulfillment of the Law**, no **atonement for sin**, and therefore, **no salvation** for mankind.

When you obey the gospel—when you believe, repent, confess, are baptized, and walk faithfully, you're not trying to earn salvation. You're responding to the obedient Christ **with your own obedience**.

Conclusion: Is Salvation By Obedience?

The evidence from scriptures is clear: **Without obedience, you cannot be saved**.

Obedience is the proof of faith, the partner of grace, the response to mercy, and the action behind love.

Salvation comes through the **mercy** of God, by His **grace**, through **faith** that is lived out in **obedience** to the will of God.

"He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." *(Hebrews 5:9)*

So, if you truly want to be saved, then **hear the word of God** (Romans 10:17), and **believe on His Son Jesus Christ** (John 3:16)**, and confess his name before men** (Romans 10:9–10; Matthew 10:32)**. Obey His commandments to repent of your sins** (Acts 2:38, Acts 17:30), **and be baptized for the remission of your sins** (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16)**.**

Do it with joy because the One who obeyed unto death now offers you eternal life.

Questions to Confirm Understanding

Estimated time to answer the questions: 1.5 – 2.5 minutes. With scripture lookup: 15 – 20 minutes.

Read and answer the following set of questions about this lesson, and circle your answer: "True | False" or "Yes | No." Look up the scriptures provided to confirm your answers. Then compare your answers with the Answer Key provided after these questions.

1. **True | False** Obedience in the Bible simply means outward compliance without the need for a willing heart. *(1 Samuel 15:22)*

2. **True | False** The Hebrew word for obedience implies listening and responding, not just hearing. *(Deuteronomy 28:1)*

3. **True | False** Noah found favor with God because of his obedient faith, not just belief. *(Genesis 6:22)*

4. **True | False** Abraham's obedience was not necessary for him to be counted as righteous. *(Genesis 22:18; Hebrews 11:8)*

5. **True | False** Moses was obedient to God in carrying out His commands, and his leadership reflected that obedience. *(Exodus 40:16)*

6. **True | False** God promised blessings to Israel if they obeyed His commandments. *(Deuteronomy 11:13–14)*

7. **True | False** Jesus taught that those who love Him will obey His commands. *(John 14:15)*

8. **True | False** Jesus became the author of eternal salvation to everyone who believes, regardless of obedience. *(Hebrews 5:9)*

9. **True | False** According to the apostles, obedience to the gospel is necessary to avoid judgment. *(2 Thessalonians 1:8)*

10. **True | False** Faith and obedience are separate and do not work together in salvation. *(James 2:18; Hebrews 11:8)*

11. **True | False** Obedience alone saves a person, even if their heart is far from God. *(Matthew 15:8)*

12. **True | False** Jesus' obedience to the Father included His death on the cross. *(Philippians 2:8)*

13. **True | False** Without Jesus' obedience, you could still be saved. *(Romans 5:19)*

14. **True | False** The Bible teaches that you are purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit. *(1 Peter 1:22)*

15. **True | False** Obedience is one part of salvation, working together with grace, mercy, faith, and works. *(Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 3:5; James 2:24; Hebrews 5:9)*

Answer Key — Lesson

Estimated time to read the answers: 10 – 15 minutes. With reflection and contemplation: 30 - 40 minutes.

1. Obedience in the Bible simply means outward compliance without the need for a willing heart. **False**
   "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)
   Biblical obedience comes from a heart that hears and responds. God desires sincere, willing obedience, not empty rituals.

2. The Hebrew word for obedience implies listening and responding, not just hearing. **True**
   "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God…" (Deuteronomy 28:1)
   The word for obedience means to listen with intention to act. Biblical obedience is always active.

3. Noah found favor with God because of his obedient faith, not just belief. **True**
   "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." (Genesis 6:22)
   Noah's salvation was linked to his obedient actions. His faith led him to obey God's **exact** instructions.

4. Abraham's obedience was not necessary for him to be counted as righteous. **False**
   "By faith Abraham obeyed…" (Hebrews 11:8)
   "…Because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:18)
   Abraham's righteousness was tied to an enacted faith. Obedience was essential to his standing with God.

5. Moses was obedient to God in carrying out His commands, and his leadership reflected that obedience. **True**
   "Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did." (Exodus 40:16)
   Moses was consistently faithful in doing what God instructed. This obedience defined his role as God's servant.

6. God promised blessings to Israel if they obeyed His commandments. **True**
   "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments… then I will give you the rain for your land…" (Deuteronomy 11:13–14)
   Obedience was the condition for receiving God's covenant blessings.

7. Jesus taught that those who love Him will obey His commands. **True**
   "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)
   Obedience to Christ is the genuine expression of love for Him.

8. Jesus became the author of eternal salvation to everyone who believes, regardless of obedience. **False**
   "He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9)
   Salvation is promised not to all who simply believe, but to those who obey Him.

9. According to the apostles, obedience to the gospel is necessary to avoid eternal damnation. **True**
   "In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel…" (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
   Obedience to the gospel is required. Those who reject it will face divine judgment.

10. Faith and obedience are separate and do not work together in salvation. **False**
    "I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:18)
    "By faith Abraham obeyed…" (Hebrews 11:8)
    Faith and obedience are inseparable. True faith is proven by obedient action.

11. Obedience alone saves a person, even if their heart is far from God. **False**
    "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8)
    God desires heartfelt obedience. External actions without inward devotion are not acceptable to Him.

12. Jesus' obedience to the Father included His death on the cross. **True**
    "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

(Philippians 2:8)
Jesus' obedience culminated in His sacrificial death for your salvation.

13. Without Jesus' obedience, you could still be saved. **False**
    "By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)
    Only through Christ's obedience can you be justified. His submission is essential to your salvation.

14. The Bible teaches that you are purified in obeying the truth. **True**
    "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit…" (1 Peter 1:22)
    Obedience to the truth of the gospel is how souls are purified, cleansed and made holy.

15. Obedience is one part of salvation, working together with grace, mercy, faith, and works. **True**
    "By grace you have been saved through faith…" (Ephesians 2:8)
    "Not by works of righteousness which you have done, but according to His mercy…" (Titus 3:5)
    "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24)
    "He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9)
    All these elements work together—none can be left out. Obedience completes the picture of a saved, faithful life.

North Main Church of Christ
1302 N. Main Street
Weatherford, TX 76087
(817) 594-6896
nmaincc@att.net
(ChatGPT assisted)