



Foundations of

FAITH

The Sin of Disobedience

Lesson 16

In the previous lesson we began a study of the nature of sin. We listed four kinds of sins – sins of immorality, sins of omission, sins of brotherly offence and sins of disobedience to God. We will now consider the last of these.

Actually, all sin is disobedience to God. If one is immoral, he has disobeyed God; if he fails to do good, he has transgressed the will of the Father. However, by sins of disobedience to God, we here refer to those things which are morally all right but religiously wrong. Not all divine commands deal with moral principles.

SOME OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES. The Old Testament abounds in examples of people who disobeyed God in matters not involving morality and who were severely punished for doing so. Paul says of Old Testament incidents, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (I Cor. 10:11) Therefore, we ought to examine these cases carefully.

When Jehovah destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the only family delivered was that of Lot, nephew of Abraham. God instructed Lot, “Escape you for your life; look not behind you, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.” (Gen. 19:17) As they left these towns upon which God rained fire and brimstone, Lot’s wife apparently could not restrain her curiosity and she looked back. Immediately she became a pillar of salt. There was nothing immoral in her action, but she paid with her life because she disobeyed God.

In I Kings 13 we are told of a young prophet whom God sent to King Jeroboam of Israel to warn against his idolatry. He was instructed, “Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that you came.” (I Kings 13:9). The king attempted to persuade the young man to go home with him, but he refused. Later, however, the prophet was deceived by an older prophet, and went home with him to eat. After leaving his host, the young prophet was slain on his way home by a lion because he had disobeyed the command of God. He had done nothing morally wrong in eating with the old man, but for his transgression he surrendered his life.

Another example is that of Uzzah. When the tabernacle was built, the Levites (who cared for it) were forbidden to touch the Ark of the Covenant which was placed in the Most Holy Place. Later, the ark was taken by the enemies of Israel, the Philistines, who kept it until they realised that it brought them only bad fortune. It was then returned to Israel where it was kept for a time in the house of Abinadab. King David then determined to move the ark once more, and it was placed upon a new cart drawn by oxen. As it went down the road it began to tip and Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, put forth his hand to hold it. Immediately, God struck him dead. (II Sam. 6:6, 7) Had Uzzah done anything morally wrong? He had not. Indeed we may reason that his intentions were the best as he did not wish the ark to fall from the cart. Morally it was not wrong for Uzzah to steady the ark, but religiously it was because God had forbidden it.

NEW TESTAMENT WARNINGS. The danger of disobeying divine commands is clearly shown in apostolic warnings. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:6-8) The curse is directed against the one who would preach a perverted gospel. We can pervert the gospel by adding to it or taking from it. If we do not speak here the scriptures speak, we have perverted the gospel; if we are not silent where they are silent, we have perverted it. John warns, “whosoever **goes onward** and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God: he that abides in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son.” (II John 9 - A.S.V.) Whenever we add to what is clearly taught, we have “gone onward.” We have spoken where the Bible has not spoken (or is silent) and therefore do not have God.

WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT. The religious world is more divided over what the Bible does not say than what it does say. As already noticed, the scriptures forbid us to go beyond what is written which means that in religious matters we are forbidden to speak when the Bible is silent. **The rule relating to our obedience to God is this: God’s commands must be obeyed without alteration. Where the method of our obedience has not been stipulated, we may rely on our own good judgment, but we may do nothing to alter the divine command.**

Numerous Biblical examples illustrate this principle. When Jehovah determined to destroy the world by water, he purposed to save the good man Noah and his family. He told Noah to build an ark and gave the specifications including the size and number of storeys. He told Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood. (Gen. 6:14) This command was both positive and negative in its implications. Positively, Noah was to use gopher wood. But negatively, he was forbidden to use any other kind of wood such as oak, hickory or maple.” True, God did not say, “Don’t use oak, hickory or maple.” But Noah knew that, when God told him **what** to use, he could not substitute anything in its place. We know that Noah did not use any other kind of wood because it is said of him, “Thus did Noah: according to all that God commanded him; so did he.”

(Gen. 6:22) Of course, God did not specify every last detail. No doubt Noah used tools in his building although these were not named. This was incidental. If Noah used tools he was simply carrying out the command to build the ark out of gopher wood. **On the other hand, had he substituted another kind of wood he would have been changing the divine injunction.**

A similar example is that of Naaman the leper, captain of the Syrian army. The prophet Elisha told him that if he desired to be cured of his leprosy he should dip himself seven times in the Jordan river. At first Naaman reasoned “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?” (II Kings 5:12) Now, Elisha had not told Naaman not to dip himself in those rivers, but had he done so he could not have expected his leprosy to be cured, since he would have been altering the command of the prophet. The command not only said “Dip yourself seven times in the Jordan,” but it also said by implication, “Do not dip yourself in any other river if you expect to be cured.”

In the New Testament we notice the Great Commission of Christ. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15) In the command the apostles were told to preach. They were also told **what** to preach, namely, the gospel. Jesus didn’t say in so many words, “don’t preach politics or economics.” But as we read the scriptures we find the apostles preaching exactly what Christ had told them to preach – the gospel. Why did they not preach politics? Jesus didn’t specifically say not to. But they knew that, when they were told what to preach, they were forbidden to preach anything else. The command included the gospel and excluded politics. On the other hand, there are many incidentals to preaching the gospel. Shall one preach on the street corner, in a church building or on the internet? This is left to our judgment. If we use the internet we are employing it as a means of carrying out the command, but if we start preaching politics we have changed the nature of the command.

Take baptism. Immersion is clearly specified in the scriptures. “Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism into death.” (Romans 6:4) Paul didn’t say, “Don’t sprinkle.” He didn’t have to. When he stated that baptism is a burial he ruled out sprinkling and pouring as substitutes. But whether one should be buried in baptism in running water or still, hot water or cold, is left strictly up to us. In either case, we are

simply carrying out the Lord’s command, but if we substituted sprinkling for a burial we would be altering the command.

The same principle applies to the Lord’s supper. In that memorial feast Jesus gave his disciples the bread, emblematic of his body, and the fruit of the vine, representative of his blood. He specified the elements of the supper – bread and fruit of the vine. Should we substitute chicken for the bread, or orange juice for the fruit of the vine we would alter the Lord’s command, even though he did not say in so many words, “Do not do that.”

When the early Christians assembled to worship God they sang praises to him. Of this singing Paul said, “Speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:19) Paul instructed Christians as to the **kind of songs** that they were to sing – psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. While he didn’t say, “Don’t sing love songs, patriotic songs or pop songs in praise to God,” we should be able to understand that these songs are excluded because the **kind** of songs is specified.

Further, on exactly the same principle that we have been studying, the **kind of music** to be used in worship of God is stated. In Colossians 3:16 we are told, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** with

grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Notice that our music is to be singing – vocal music. All other New Testament scriptures relating to the subject teach the same thing. While instrumental music in **worship** (there is no objection to its use for personal entertainment) is not forbidden in so many words, it is excluded on the same basis that preaching politics or partaking of orange juice in the Lord’s supper are excluded. The command has been given and we are not at liberty to change it by substituting something else for what the Lord has told us to do. If we add instrumental music to our singing we have altered the command by speaking where the scriptures are silent. Had the scriptures said, “Make music,” then it would have been up to us to determine the kind of music to be used, but since we are told to sing instead, we are forbidden to choose the kind of music.

There are incidentals in the command to sing. Any song requires a tune. We are not told whether that tune shall be written or memorised. In using a hymn book as an aid to singing we have not changed the command to sing. The only **kind** of music we make as we sing with a hymn book is vocal, but if we add another **kind** of music we have altered the command.

In conclusion let us note that if there is a question as to whether God will accept our actions, it is better to be safe than risk disobeying God. For disobedience to God is sin, and sin can keep us from eternal life.

TEST ON LESSON 16

The following passages tell how God punished some individual or individuals for disobedience to his commands. In the first blank (A) after each scripture write the name of the disobedient person(s). In the second blank (B) write the sin committed. In the third blank (C) write the punishment administered by God. First one is done correctly:

1. II Samuel 6:1-7. (A) **Uzzah.** (B) **He touched the ark.** (C) **He was struck dead.**
2. Leviticus 10:1, 2. (A) (B)..... (C).....
3. I Samuel 15:1-23. (A) (B)..... (C).....
4. Genesis 19:17-26. (A) (B)..... (C).....
5. I Kings 13:1-26. (A) (B)..... (C).....

Underline the phrase that correctly completes the following statements:

1. A preacher carries out the command to preach the gospel if he preaches about: (a) the resurrection of Christ, (b) who will win the next election, (c) the minimum wage law.
2. The teaching that baptism is a burial is not disobeyed when one (a) has water sprinkled on him, (b) has water poured on him, (c) is baptised in still water.
3. The elements of the Lord's supper are changed if: (a) a plate is used for the bread, (b) cake and coffee are added, (c) individual cups are used to contain the fruit of the vine.
4. The command that songs sung in worship should be psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is changed if we sing: (a) "Rock of Ages", (b) The Old Rugged Cross", (c) "Auld Lang Syne."
5. The command to sing in worship is carried out without alteration if: (a) we use instrumental music entirely, (b) we both sing and use instrumental music, (c) we use a hymn book to give us the tune.

Write true or false after the following statements:

1. It is possible for something to be morally right, yet religiously wrong.
2. Old Testament examples are of no value to us today.
3. The Galatians were accepting a perverted gospel.
4. The gospel may be perverted by adding to it or taking from it.
5. If we speak where the scriptures are silent, we please God.
6. If God has given a command, but not specified the method, we may determine the method ourselves.
7. Any addition to a command which is not specifically condemned by the command is allowable.
8. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 state the kind of music Christians should use in worshipping God.

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Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

- Section 1 –
2. (A) Nadab and Ahihu, (B) Offered strange fire, (C) Consumed by fire.
 3. (A) Saul, (B) Spared King Agag and animals, (C) Rejected as king.
 4. (A) Lot's wife, (B) Looked back, (C) Turned to pillar of salt.
 5. (A) A prophet, (B) Ate and drank where he had not been commanded, (C) Killed by lion.

Section 2 – (a), (c), (b), (c), (c).

Section 3 – T, F, T, T, F, T, F, T.

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