

Obedience's Most Important Element – Hebrews 11:6-8

I. Introduction:

- A. For what is Noah best known?
1. If you didn't assume this was a trick question, wouldn't you say Noah is best known for building the ark?
 2. Extending our answer, we might point to the deluge, which is erroneously called "*Noah's flood.*"
 3. After a little thought you might say that Noah was the one who saved the air-breathing animals of creation.
 4. More importantly, Noah saved a remnant of humanity from the destruction of God's wrath.
- B. With those answers and perhaps a few more in our heads, let's now read this evening's text: **Hebrews 11:6-7.**
1. *"Without **FAITH** it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
 - a. *By **FAITH** Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by **FAITH.**"*
 2. *"For what **should** Noah be most famous?"* If we used nothing but **Hebrews**, our answer should be **FAITH.**
 3. But there is a second question to consider: *"What did Noah's faith do?"* Because of faith Noah built the ark.
 4. James reminds us that *"faith without works is dead."*
- C. Along with Noah I'd like to add his friend in the faith – Abraham – to illustrate this message.
1. **Hebrews 11:8** says, *"By **FAITH** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*
 2. Even though Paul's primary thought was faith – Noah's faith and now Abraham's faith – his point was that each of their faith's did something.
 3. *"By faith Noah... prepared an ark..."*
 4. And, *"by faith Abraham... obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*
- D. Turning my opening illustration inside out, my subject tonight is **"OBEDIENCE'S Most Important Element."**

II. Before getting to that point, here are just a few **GENERAL THOUGHTS** about **OBEDIENCE.**

- A. They are so obvious that some people might think it is a waste of time to bring these up.
1. But it is **because** they are so **obvious** that we might skip over them when we shouldn't.
 2. We need to be regularly reminded of these things.
- B. For example, the Bible is filled with **EXHORTATIONS** to obedience. God says, *"Obey me."*
1. **Deuteronomy 26:26** – *"This day the Lord thy God hath **COMMANDED** thee to do these statutes and judgments; thou shalt therefore **KEEP** and **DO** them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."*
 2. **Deuteronomy 32:46** – *"Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to **observe to DO**, all the words of this law."*
- C. After dozens of **exhortations** to obey, we have dozens of other verses with **ENCOURAGEMENT** to obey.
1. **Joshua 1:8** – *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then though halt have good success."*
 2. **I Samuel 15:22** – *"Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams."*
- D. Along with the exhortations & **direct** encouragements, come **indirect** encouragements through **EXAMPLES.**
1. Just about every person mentioned in **Hebrews 11** were people of both faith and obedience – Enoch, Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others.
 2. But it is not my purpose tonight to spend a lot of time in fellowship with this wonderful crowd.

3. Skipping over them, suffice it to say that the best of the best of these obedient people of faith was the Lord Jesus himself.

4. **Hebrew 5:8** – *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered...”*

E. Following the exhortations, encouragements and examples, there is plenty of **EVIDENCE** for God’s blessing on obedience.

1. **Exodus 19:5** – *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.”*

2. Then at the end of the Bible we read: *“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city”* – **Revelation 22:14**.

F. With **Hebrews 11** in front of us, it should be easy to answer my next question:

III. What is obedience’s most important element?

A. If we hadn’t already read **Hebrews 11**, a good, but incorrect, answer might be **knowledge**.

1. In order to obey the Lord properly, we need to know what it is He would like us to do.

2. As most of you who are here tonight know, our grand-daughter, Sahalie, has a new puppy.

a. That dog has the intelligence of a poodle, which is to say she doesn’t have the IQ of 180.

b. For the most part I think Bindy would like to obey and please her mistress, but she doesn’t have the mental capacity or the knowledge to always do the right thing.

3. And remembering that **our** relationship to Jehovah is even more distant than a poodle is from a person, sometimes – many times – we aren’t obedient because we haven’t figured out what to do to obey.

4. To know God’s will is important toward our obedience, and that is why God told Joshua, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.”*

5. Despite the importance of knowing what to do to please the Lord, there is something more important.

B. And despite appearing to be obvious, the **ability** to obey is not the supreme thing either.

1. An eighteen-year-old young lady may have the skill to preach a wonderful gospel sermon, but I don’t believe she should be invited to preach next Sunday.

a. For her to preach would not be an act of obedience, because it would be outside God’s revealed will.

b. Also, an eight-year-old boy should not be criticized for not volunteering to preach next Sunday.

c. He probably would **not** have the **ability** to obey the command to *“preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*

2. The ability to obey is not the most important ingredient in obedience.

3. As has been said by many, *“more important than ability is availability,”* and I will add yet another – *“amenability”* – a willingness to obey.

C. This means another important ingredient in the kind of obedience which pleases God is a person’s **attitude**.

1. Obedience which is forced by law or a whip isn’t the kind of service the Lord would like us to give Him.

2. As God said to Israel, *“I want you to do these things which please me, with all your hearts and souls.”*

3. The infinitely capable God, could create robots to serve Him, but that kind of obedience doesn’t glorify Him.

4. For example, we should all be willing to give to support the Lord’s work with our financial offerings, but to tithe like a Pharisee, doesn’t please the Lord.

a. Not needing our money, God doesn’t want us to give grudgingly or of necessity.

b. He would like us all to be *“cheerful givers”* – **II Corinthians 9:7**.

c. And I don’t believe that He wants us to count our pennies, pulling one out of every hundred to give Him.

D. No, the most important element in obedience is **not knowledge** or **ability** or **attitude**, even though these things may be relatively important in various ways.

IV. Obedience's most important ingredient is **FAITH**.

- A. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."* **"By faith Abraham... obeyed..."**
- B. Every once in a while we need to stop & ask ourselves: *"Why do I do these things God commands me to do?"*
1. For example, why do I preach the gospel?
 - a. Why do we pray? Why do we love one another? Why do we struggle to overcome personal sin?
 - b. Why did Noah build the ark? That question could be answered in several partially correct ways.
 2. Why do we obey the Lord?
 - a. We do these things that we might be pleasing to the Lord, and so that His blessing may fall upon us.
 - b. We do these things that souls might be saved.
 - c. We do them to strengthen the Lord's church so that she can move forward in evangelism.
 - d. We obediently fight the good fight of faith, in order that our grandchildren will have the opportunity to know the truth.
 3. All of these things, while not exactly wrong, miss the mark at the center of the target.
 4. More important than these things, our primary purpose in all that we do should be for the glory of the One who saved us – redeemed us.
- C. Just as our **service** should be for His glory, and our **sacrifice** should be for His glory, our **obedience** should be for his glory as well.
1. And more often than not, that requires faith on our part.
 2. Take the preaching of the gospel as an example:
 - a. I have learned through the years that no matter how well I study and prepare, the results are up to God.
 - b. And often, the better I feel about a sermon **before** it is preached, is just the opposite to what I feel afterwards.
 - c. I must preach in faith, and I beseech you to pray for my faith and that you listen in faith.
- D. But getting back to obedience generally, or Abraham's faith more specifically, what sort of things should our faith contain?
1. We need to trust God to be God. I know that sounds simplistic, but it is true.
 2. For example, we must have faith in the God who has a right to command our obedience.
 - a. If someone came to me with a command given to him by Zeus or Thor, I might walk away worried about his sanity.
 - b. But the God of the Bible is not a product of ancient imaginations. He is the Creator and He is the Judge.
 3. Laying aside everything else which is true about Jehovah, and believing these two things, when Jehovah tells us to jump we should jump.
 4. He has the right to command our obedience.
 - a. He who has saved our souls, is worthy of our trust, when He tells us to expend our bodies.
 - b. He who has promised mansions in glory, is worthy of our obedience when He tells us to move from Ur in the Chaldees.
 - c. He who has given us skills and talents, should be obeyed in the use of those skills and talents.
 5. He who really is God should be obeyed in faith.
- E. And because of what the Bible teaches us about God, we should have faith that He is righteous in His orders.
1. The Lord would never have us do something which is immoral or sinful.
 2. When Noah started cutting down thousands of gopher trees in order to build the ark, the early tree huggers might have accused him of an environmental crime.
 3. But obedience to God is not a crime; it is not a sin, because God cannot sin – **James 1:13**.
 4. We can and should obey in faith, knowing that what we have been ordered to do by God is always right.

- F. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that our Lord is a deity of love. We can trust the God who loves us.
1. One day He appeared to Abram and said, *“I want you to leave your homeland, your family, your vegetable garden and your buried ancestors.”*
 - a. We aren't told **how** God appeared to Abram. We aren't told about a dream or vision or angelic visitation
 - b. It may have simply been the Holy Spirit speaking to the surrendered heart of that man.
 - c. *“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will shew thee.”*
 2. I don't know whether or not Abraham trusted in God's love at that point, but he did trust the God who did love him, and Abraham obeyed.
 3. When the Lord lays upon the heart of a young man to go to Indochina as a missionary, he can rest assured that God is not punishing or chastising him for some sin. Such a command reveals God's love.
 4. When God tells someone to sacrifice his good-paying job for a lesser job, but with more time to serve the Saviour, he can trust in the Lord's love to him and his family.
- G. I feel as if I'm not communicating what is in my heart this evening.
1. What I am trying to say is that when God tells us to obey Him we can do it, if we have faith to trust Him.
 2. It may be that God's command involves something which could prove to be difficult.
 3. The more difficult the task, the more essential it is to trust our commander.
 4. We may not see the purpose or the end of that command, and we may hear arguments against obedience.
 5. But putting into practice the faith which the Lord has given to us, obedience becomes easy.
 6. And victory will be given by the Lord at the point when God intends it.
- H. *“**BY FAITH** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **OBEYED**; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”*