

Having considered the first two headings this morning—Who and Why should we obey—we come to our third and final main heading—How should we obey—now in examining this topic I want to largely limit our focus to Psalm 119, a Psalm that celebrates the relation of God’s people to God’s word—in fact out of the 176 verses, the word of God is mentioned in every verse but two—the Psalmist uses seven different titles for the word of God—law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, and word—these are virtually synonymous with one another, although each one sheds a unique light upon the nature of Scripture...

I. How should we obey?

A. Carefully

1. The first description of gospel or evangelical obedience is that it is careful and diligent in obeying—it carefully observes the commandments of God...
2. At the heart of the idea of careful obedience is the concept of esteem and reverence—the recognition of the authority behind the commandments...
3. This is to say that a Christian obeys God’s word not as a mere suggestion or proposition but as the word of his Sovereign...
4. Let me illustrate—let’s say you worked as store manager for Wal-Mart, and Sam Walmart himself, happened to visit your store...
5. Let’s say he approached you with a short list of things to do, and asked if you would give them priority, ensuring that you did everything on the list...
6. In what manner do you think you would do this list—would you be careful to accomplish everything on the list...
7. I suggest that you would be very careful to ensure that you did everything on the list in the exact manner it was written...
8. Deut.15:4-5—“for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance—only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today...”
9. We here have one of the many passages throughout the book of Deuteronomy, where God describes the blessings that awaited Israel in the Promised Land...
10. V4—“for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance...”
11. Such blessings were conditioned upon their obedience—“only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God...”
12. Notice the kind of obedience that the Lord promises to bless, a careful observance of those commands —“which I command you today...”
13. You see behind such carefulness is the acknowledgment of God’s authority—because they are the commands of God we are—“to observe them with care...”
14. The commands of God come to the Christian as the commands of God—the law never ceases to be the law...
15. Some have been given the impression that the law no longer comes in a commanding and demanding way to the Christian...
16. But God’s commands don’t come to the Christian as suggestions or proposals—but they come as commands...
17. Thus a Christian is careful to obey all that God tells him to do—he looks upon the list of God’s commands with a sense of divine authority...
18. This of course is in direct contrast to those who are mere professors of religion—for they fail to look upon God’s commands with such carefulness...
19. Their hearts have never been opened to the divine authority of God’s holy law—they look upon the commandments with little concern...

20. Prov.19:16—“he who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, *but* he who is careless of his ways will die...”
21. It forever frightens me when I look upon professing Christians who lack this carefulness with regards to God’s commands...
22. It’s as if they are saying—what’s the big deal—what’s all the concern about—why does everybody in this church get so excited about the littlest of things...
23. Let me say this—any church that takes seriously the law of God will have people in it with strong [and at times differing] convictions of particular commandments...
24. Why—because they are being careful in the way in which they are complying with the list given them by their Sovereign Lord...
25. Matt.5:19—“whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven...”

B. Heartily

1. By this I mean that true Christian obedience goes beyond outward actions, but stems from the inward disposition of sincerity—we are to obey God from the heart...
2. Col.3:22—“bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God...”
3. We sometimes speak of those whose actions lack this hearty element—we might say, his heart is not in it...”
4. But any obedience that is done without the heart, is the mere shell or appearance of obedience and is not accepted by God...
5. Thomas Boston—“Hypocritical obedience may please men, but not God, the searcher of hearts...that sacrifice that lacks the heart, will never be accepted on God’s altar...”
6. Let me illustrate—you’ve heard the story of the little child, who has told by his father to sit down at the dinner table, and yet the child wanted to stand up in his chair...
7. Finally after being threatened with a spanking, he sits down, only to confess defiantly—although I am sitting down on the outside on the inside I am still standing up...
8. Ps.119:34—“give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart...” v69—“the proud have forged a lie against me, *but* I will keep your precepts with *my* whole heart...”
9. Notice the phrase—“I will keep your precepts with my whole heart...”—literally—“I will keep your precepts with all of my inner being...”
10. True evangelical and gospel obedience originates in the heart—it is foremostly concerned with what God thinks and not man...

C. Totally

1. By this I mean true Christian obedience has respect to the totality of God’s law and is not selective or partial...
2. Ps.119:4-6—“You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all your commandments...”
3. Can I speak frankly—there are some of us who have so divided our lives that we have areas wherein we have refused to obey God...
4. For example—with reference to our entertainment—we somehow have convinced ourselves that God’s law has no bearing upon what we read and watch on television...
5. We convince ourselves that as long as we don’t do such things ourselves we are guiltless—but to willfully watch them is to be guilty of them...
6. Thus we exclude certain areas in our lives and homes from coming under the scrutiny of God’s all-seeing eyes...
7. Let me illustrate—if the various activities of our lives are doors within our soul, have we barred any from the all-seeing eye of God...

8. Can you and I look into all the commandments of God and not be ashamed—or are there areas where we have closed the door to God...
9. Are we worshiping God [both publicly and privately] according to truth—are we keeping the Sabbath day holy—are we honoring all God-ordained authority...
10. Are we keeping our hearts pure from sexual immorality—are we honoring the Lord with our substance—are we speaking the truth about our neighbors...

D. Continually

1. By this I mean our obedience must be habitual or continual—the Scriptures know nothing of a part time Christianity...
2. What happens is that we lower the standard of God’s law and judge ourselves based upon our past performance...
3. We reason like this—I haven’t committed this sin for many weeks, and so surely God will understand if I commit it after all this time...
4. But the law of God demands that we render perpetual obedience in all things at all times—and this demand does not lessen in the life of a Christian...
5. One problem that some of us have is that we somehow think, that the standard of the law has been lowered for the believer or Christian...
6. But the law is the law and it will never be anything else—our relation to it has been changed but the nature of it stays the same...
7. Thus Christians are expected to keep the commandments, to obey God, continually, at all times, without exception...
8. Ps.119:44—“So shall I keep your law continually, forever and ever...” v117—“hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe your statutes continually...”
9. Deut.5:29—“oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever...”
10. Prov.6:20-22—“my son, keep your father's command, And do not forsake the law of your mother. 21 Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. 22 When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and *when* you awake, they will speak with you...”
11. Lk.1:74-75—“to grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life...”

E. Quickly

1. By this I mean that true and evangelical obedience must spring from a ready and willing heart—a heart that says with Eli—“speak, LORD, for your servant hears...”
2. Ps.119:59-60—“I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep your commandments...”
3. Notice David gave himself to self-reflection or consideration—“I thought about my ways...”—he reflected upon his behavior...
4. Having thought about his ways, he then—“turned his feet to God’s testimonies...”—that is, he realigned himself to the commandments of God...
5. He compared himself with the commandments of God and found inconsistencies—he found errors within his life that were out of line with God’s will...
6. Thus he turned his feet to be in harmony to God’s will—he resolved to obey the righteous law and revealed will of God...
7. But I want you to notice the manner in which he sought this alignment—“I made haste, and did not delay to keep your commandments...”
8. In other words as he thought about his ways [as he examined his life as a husband, father, employee, and churchmen], he found himself lacking...
9. And as he looked into the righteous commandments of God, he saw the right way—and there was no delay in between finding his faults and turning his feet...

10. Can I tell you a fear that I have—there are some of us who have been told of various areas in our life that off track...
11. And instead of making haste and turning your feet to God’s testimonies, you have delayed and postponed your obedience...
12. But this is very unlike David, who having thought upon his ways, he hastily [or quickly] turned his feet to God’s commands...
13. A purposefully delayed obedience is disobedience, Js.4:17—“to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin...”
14. Thus I don’t think the need for many of us to learn more about His commandments, but its to do what we already know we should...

F. Joyfully

1. By this I mean that our obedience must be rendered in a joyful and enjoyable manner—which is in contrast to a forced drudgery...
2. For the Christian the commandments of God are no longer burdensome—they are not a heavy and tiresome chore...
3. Ps.119:14—“I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches...”—he rejoiced in keeping the commandments as a miser rejoiced in his riches... (cp.v111)
4. But it important to notice that David’s joy wasn’t merely in the commandments, but—“in the way of your testimonies...”
5. That is, he rejoiced in walking in the commandments—not merely in speaking about them, in thinking about them, but in doing them...

G. Lovingly

1. By this I mean we must render our obedience out of love to God and to His commandments—out of a delight in God and delight in His law...
2. Ps.119:16—“I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word...” v24—“Your testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counselors...” v35—“make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it...” v47—“and I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love...” v48—“my hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love...” v70—“I delight in your law...” v77—“your law is my delight...” v92—“unless your law had been my delight...” v97—“oh, how I love your law...” v113—“I hate the double-minded, but I love your law...” v119—“I love your testimonies...” v127—“I love your commandments...” v140—“your word is very pure; therefore your servant loves it...” v143—“your commandments are my delights...” v159—“consider how I love your precepts...” v163—“I hate and abhor lying, but I love your law...” v165—“great peace have those who love your law...” v167—“my soul keeps your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly...” v174—“I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight...”
3. Notice two things—[1] love is a motive for obedience, Jn.14:15—“if you love me, keep my commandments....”
4. Notice [2] love is the end of obedience—here I think of the many places where we are told—“love is the fulfillment of the law...”