

Saints Alive

Obedience That Comes From Faith

March 6, 2022

Today we're taking a good look at the obedience that comes from faith.

But *first*, what's your *first* reflexive response to this: **Are you a saint?** There's no *kind'a* or *sometimes*. There's *only* the two camps: **the saints and the ain'ts.**

Paul, [calls himself] a *bondservant* of Jesus Christ, – Romans 1:1 NKJ

A bondservant was a slave who was set *free*, but *desired* to *continue* faithfully serving a *loving* master and his *family* ... *as* family. There are instructions in the Old Testament.



If you buy a Hebrew servant [they could sell *themselves* under *contract*; and often did to *pay a debt*] ... in the seventh [year] he shall *go out* free and pay nothing. – Exodus 21:5-6 NKJ

And when you send him away free ... you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. ... [If] [having no *need to stay*] he says to you, 'I will not go away from you,' because he *loves* you and your *house* ... you shall take an awl and thrust it through [i.e. *pierce*] his ear to the door, and he [by his own *freewill*] shall be your servant *forever*. [Through a *bond of love*] – Deuteronomy 15:12-17 NKJ



[Paul, a *bondservant* of *Jesus*] ... received grace and apostleship to call people ... to the obedience that comes from faith. [That means obeying *Him* when it's *unappealing* or even *perplexing* to you] And you *also* are *among* those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ ... who are *loved* by *God* and called to be saints – Romans 1:5-7 NIV

So, *are* you a *saint*? Do you *serve* Him with the *grateful*, ear-pierced *eagerness* of a devoted *bondservant*? I mean, **do you belong to Him, or does He belong to you?** Who's *calling* the shots?

As [Jesus] was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy ... called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When He saw them, He said, "Go, *show* yourselves to the *priests*." ["You mean *after* you heal *us*?" "Go, show the *priests*." "Show 'em *what*? We're not allowed *near* 'em." "Go, show yourselves." "You got it, *Boss!*"] And [here's the thing] *as* they went, they were *cleansed*. [Because *that's* the *obedience* that comes from *faith*. This isn't a *secret formula* for *healing*, but an example of obeying what Jesus clearly commands, when it makes no sense] *One* of them, when he saw *he* was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' *feet* and *thanked* Him [It's *one* thing to be *healed*; it's *another* to be *grateful*] ... Then [Jesus] said to him, "Rise and go; your [obedience that came from your] faith [in *My* authority] has made you well." [Because *that's* what *compelled* him to go *do* what He *said*] – Luke 17:11-19 NIV

Obedience that comes from faith is when **you know what you're supposed to do, but it doesn't make sense to you.** Until it *does* – whether on *this* side of the veil, or *that*. Paul writes:

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, **because [the stories of the obedience of] your faith is being reported all over the world.** – Romans 1:8 NIV

I wonder what's reported about us, outside *these* walls? One visitor told us how she'd told her counselor she *hated* going to *church* because of the *people*. And her counselor – who doesn't attend here – said, "You should try *His Place*; I hear they're *impossible to hate*." I've never been more *proud* to be your *server*! So, **what stories of awkward faithful obedience do you have?**

Now, Paul *really* wants to go see his friends, so he tells 'em he's been praying, that ...

I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. – Romans 1:10 NKJ



What a great *line*! **Paul's wants take a backseat to God's will.** But he *got* there. In chains. After being shipwrecked and bitten on the beach by a deadly snake. (Acts 27:1, 41; 28:3) Did *Paul* think *all this* was "in the will of God"? God *used* it; who cares if He *caused* it? Not *Paul*! Cuz **that's the Master's business.** Paul prayed for a *way*; and his hardships *along* the way resulted in NT lessons of faith for the whole *world*. And the snakebite led the Islanders to the Lord. All we can know for *sure* is that **God's will is quite often quite unlike our will for God's will,** and that *saints* gotta *serve*.

Do not *fret* because of *evildoers* ... **[be a saint]** *Trust* in the *Lord*, and *do good*; dwell in the land, **[down under]** and *feed* on *His* faithfulness. – Psalm 37:1-4 NKJ

[Because] *[He]* made *himself nothing*, taking the very *nature* of a *servant* ... obedient to *death*— even death on a *cross*! Therefore God *exalted* Him to the *highest* place and *gave* Him the *name* that is above *every* name, that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should *bow* ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, – Philippians 2:7-11 NIV



There's a good reason Paul was so eager to go see those Romans.

I long to see you *so that* ... you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's **[stories of obedience that comes from]** *faith*. – Romans 1:11-12 NIV



Faith doesn't grow in isolation. No matter how good it is to get away, we need to *return* and *receive* each other's *encouragement*; because *that's* what it takes when *obedience* requires *faith*. That's *fellowship* in a *nutshell*. **Sharing our stories and feeding on our shared faith.** So, do you *share* well with *others*? Especially those outside, who don't yet *know* the *taste* of *freedom*? We've compared sin to cancer, and there's another way to think about it. **If you were given a free cure for every cancer, to share with whoever, would you keep it to yourself?** No? Well, we've got a greater *cure* and a clear-cut *command*!

[Our Lord said] “As the *Father* has sent *Me*, I also send you.” – John 20:21 NKJ

So how’d the *Father* send *Him*? Jesus pointed it out in the book of *Isaiah*. (Lk 4:17-18)

I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You ... as a light ... to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, [of blindness] those who sit in darkness from the prison house. – Isaiah 42:6-7 NKJ

A cure for cancer can’t hold a candle to a cure for death itself! So why would we keep the world in the dark? **Bondservants don’t see the Lord’s commands as suggestions or options.**

I am obligated [says Paul; how ‘bout you?] ... That is why I am so eager to preach the Gospel [and share the stories of faith] ... I am not ashamed – Romans 1:14-16 NIV

If someone had a cure for cancer, would they be obligated to share it? **Absolutely! Otherwise they’d be robbing the dying of life.** Would they be eager? **Obviously!** Would they be ashamed? Dumb question. **Do people ever view you as unobligated, uneager, and a little ashamed?**

I am not ashamed of the Gospel, [writes Paul] because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who [simply and freely] believes – Romans 1:16 NIV



One day a guy’s gonna show up, and you’re gonna realize that Jesus himself is physically appearing to you! You’ll be like, “You’re Jesus!” And He’ll be all smiles: “Only you can see Me.” “Why?” “Look down.” **“My body fell off!”** Like fingernail clippings. Who even wants ‘em back?! “Am I dead?” “Just the opposite. You’ve been alive since the cure. This is just a transition. And I gotta tell ya, it’s pretty perfect up there!” **That’s the cure we have to offer. An eternal bond with the One who sets us free.** It can’t be earned. But it’s gotta be trusted and appreciated regardless of the outcome.

For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith [first in the Law – but now in our Lord] from first to last, [from religion to relationship] just as it is written: [by the OT prophet Habakkuk, who saw what was to come (2:4)] “The righteous will live by faith [in Jesus as their chosen Lord and Savior].” – Romans 1:17 NIV



Once they’ve gone from faith to faith – from religion to relationship – like the way we live by breath-to-breath. All the Law was God-breathed, (2 Tim 3:16) but **we can’t live on the breath we took yesterday. Ever stay under water too long?** Did you feel obligated to breath? Were you eager to breath? Ashamed to breath? Dumb question.

Therefore, since we [bondservants] have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through [the ultimate faithful obedience of] our Lord Jesus Christ – Romans 5:1 NIV

As “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18) once said:



“If anyone desires to be *first*, he shall be last of all and *servant of all*.” – Mark 9:35 NKJ

[And so] He [by His own freewill and faithful obedience] was *pierced* for our *transgressions* ... and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. – Isaiah 53:5-6 NIV

[And on the Day of the *first Pentecost post resurrection*, Peter said] “Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made *Him* both *Lord* and *Christ* [Master and Savior] —this Jesus whom *you* crucified.” Now when they heard this, *they were pierced to the heart*, and said ... “Brethren, what shall we *do*?” – Acts 2:36-37 NAS



The *one* thing only a bondservant *can* do: **grateful acts of faithful obedience**. Which is *not* to say it’s an *easy path*. In fact, Paul talks about the *uphill battle* of his *own* struggles to *do what’s right*. (Rom 7:15-20) Faithful obedience is like walking on an icy hillside, trying not to *backslide*. **Sin is the downward pull** of the *former* master who refuses to set us *free* without a *fight*! And **righteousness is the upward path** where we walk in *true* freedom with the King of the mountain. But *down* here, *down* is always *easier* than *up*. But *gratitude* for *grace* and *stories of faith* inspire us to *steadily* and *increasingly* resist the path of least resistance.



And as we come in out of the cold, it’s like submerging near-frozen fingers or toes under warm water. Ever do *that*? It *stings*, like *needles*. Like when we put our *pride* and *sin* under His *authority*. That’s why **obedience is so unappealing at first** – and why it requires faith to push through the painful process of restoring life into what’s gone cold. Because you just want to put your hands back in the cold to numb the pain, even though you *know* it’ll kill ‘em. So, “what shall we do?” **Push through!** Because when we do, it *begins* to feel *good*. And you’ll want it *warmer*. And then *hot*. **Because the heat that brings pain ultimately brings pleasure.**



And *that’s* when going back out in the *cold* loses *all* its appeal. And *that’s* when you know that restoration is taking place *deep* inside. And *remembering* and *sharing* the painful process, in its many forms of faithful obedience, will greatly encourage ourselves and others, **to lean into the pain and suffering of the warm bubble bath**. Because, after all, **it takes time for bondservants to adjust to freewill obedience**. Paul bookends Romans by encouraging his fellow bondservants.



Offer yourselves to God, as *those* who have been brought from *death to life*; [and *know the cure*] and offer the parts of your body to Him [especially that *frozen tongue*] as *instruments* of righteousness. For *sin* shall *not* be *your* master, because *you* are not under law, but [from faith to faith, *gladly serve*] under grace. – Romans 6:13-14 NIV

So don’t hold your faith in too long, or it’ll suffocate!