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**Following God's Directions**

**50 Days of Faith (Part 6)**

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‘It is a beautiful scene to see people learning to give generously in the midst of a very selfish and idolatrous world.’ That was the scene King David witnessed three thousand years ago as the people of God gave sacrificially to build the temple in Jerusalem.’ It was the largest single donation to the house of the Lord in recorded history and it caused David to burst into prayer.’ That prayer is recorded for us in 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:10.’ *David prayed to the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, ‘Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.’ Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.’ Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things.’ In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.’ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.’ ‘But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously like this.’ Everything comes from You. And we have only given to You what came from Your hand.’ O Lord our God, for all this abundance that we have provided for building a temple for Your holy name it comes from Your hand and it all belongs to You.’*

We give because God has first given to us and one of the greatest gifts He has given to us is the gift of faith.’ In Matthew, chapter eight, we read about a man who had the gift of faith.’ It reads, ‘*One day a Roman army officer came to Jesus and said, ‘Lord, my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.’ Jesus said, ‘I will go and heal him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.’ But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.’ ‘When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth.’ I have not found anyone in all of Israel with such great faith.’* (Matthew 8:5-10)’ Why did Jesus consider this man’s faith to be so great?’ It is because this man understood the relationship between faith and obedience.’ He knew his own soldiers obeyed him because they had faith in him.’ They recognized his authority and they honored him with their

obedience.’ In the same way, this man recognized Jesus’ authority and was showing Jesus that he was willing to trust and obey him.’ **‘Just say the word, Jesus, and I’ll walk away because I trust you and if you say my servant will be healed I know he will be healed.’** Faith and obedience are inseparably related. ‘Faith and obedience always go together.

In Deuteronomy chapter five, verse 33 Moses instructs the people of God to: **‘Follow all the directions the Lord has given you.’ Then life will go well for you.’** Why? ‘ Because obedience is the surest expression of our faith and when God sees our faith He rewards us for it.’ In fact, God gives one promise after another to those who obey His commands.’ I’ve listed just a few of them for you in your bulletin.’ If you obey God, He promises to bless you, to save you, to watch over you, to take care of you, to help you and to give you whatever you ask.’ These are just a few of the many promises of God to those who obey Him.’ The Bible says if you obey God’s directions for how you are to live life, then you will be rewarded ‘ it will go well for you.’ You’ll be happy.’ You’ll live longer.’ You’ll lack for nothing that is good because you’ll have everything you need.’ You’ll have perfect freedom.’ You’ll have greater wisdom.’ You’ll live with security and peace.’ He also promises prosperity and success.’ You’ll be great in the kingdom of heaven and you’ll receive an eternal reward beyond your wildest imagination.

**‘Obedience is the premise behind all the promises of God.’** He offers His promises as an act of grace.’ We must receive his promises as an act of faith and the evidence of faith is always obedience.’ As James said, **‘Faith without works is dead.’** (James 3:20) ‘It simply can’t exist. The evidence of our faith is our obedience to the Lord.’

‘ So **how do we receive God’s promises?**’ It’s a matter of faith ‘ faith that expresses itself in obedience to God’s directions for our lives.’ And there are some important things we need to know about **how God wants us to obey.**’ **‘FIRST, WE ARE TO OBEY GOD IMMEDIATELY.’** Don’t delay.’ Don’t wait till later.’ Don’t procrastinate.’ Don’t put it off.’ Don’t make excuses.’ Don’t drag your feet.’ We are to obey God’s directions immediately ‘ as soon as we can.’ The prodigal son came to his senses and immediately he left his life of sin and returned to his father’s house to ask for forgiveness. ‘In Psalm 119:32 David says to God, **‘I will quickly obey your commands.’** In Psalm 119:60 David reveals the secret to his prosperity.’ He says to the Lord, **‘Without delay I hurry to obey your commands.’** If there is a time in your life when you ought to hurry it is when God tells you to do something.’ Don’t delay.’ Obey God immediately even when you don’t understand how it’s going to work or what the benefit will be.’

We don't have to understand how something works in order to benefit from it.' I don't have a clue as to how my computer really works but that doesn't stop me from relying on it and benefiting from it.' I don't understand why God asks me to do certain things, but I've come to believe I can trust Him in all things.' If I have faith and obey God immediately I know I can trust him to reward me.' When we hesitate to obey God it shows our lack of faith in him.' When we fail to obey God, we demonstrate our lack of faith in him to do what is best for us.' God wants us to obey what He commands right away.' Unless the command has a qualifying clause like *'on the first of every week'* then he means for us to do it now.' *'Love your neighbor and pray for those who persecute you'* means right now, not when your neighbor apologizes for being a jerk, but right now.' Pray right now for those who have mistreated you.

**'SECOND, WE ARE TO OBEY GOD COMPLETELY.'** We can't just partially obey God's commands or half heartedly obey God and have it go well for us.' We have to obey completely.' Psalm 119: 4 says, *'Lord, You gave your orders to be obeyed completely.'* We can't just partially obey God or sometimes obey God and expect to receive all the benefits He promises to those who obey Him.'

'God's moral law ' His definition of right and wrong, hasn't changed down through the years.' The Ten Commandments are still the clearest and most concise expression of God's will for our lives today as they were 12,000 years ago.' Lot's of things change but God's moral law abides forever.' If we live by His law it will go well with us, but if we hesitate to obey or if we only partially obey, God is not obligated to bless our lack of faith and obedience.

We also have to realize that God has a much bigger perspective on things than we do.' He sees things that we can't see.' Sometimes we have to trust Him even when we don't see the reward.' The Bible says, *'Your job is not to decide whether God's law is right or wrong, but to obey it.'* (James 4:11c)' The oldest temptation in recorded history isn't lust or lying or gluttony.' It's refusing to trust God.' When the serpent came to Eve in the Garden of Eden, he sowed the seeds of doubt in Eve's heart by telling her God wasn't to be trusted.' Eve believed the serpent and failed to trust God.' Every time you and I sin we are failing to trust God. 'Faith on the other hand is an act of trusting God.' Proverbs 3:5 says, *'Trust in the Lord from the bottom of your heart.'* *Don't try to figure out everything on your own.'* And if we trust him we will obey him.

The Bible tells us about a man named Naaman.' He had leprosy, so He went to Elijah and said, **'Look Elijah, I'm a very important man, but I have this problem.' I have leprosy.' What should I do?'** Elijah told him to go down to the Jordan River and dip into the water seven times.' Naaman says, **'I don't want to do that.' Everyone will see me and I'll be humiliated.'** Elijah says, **'Yes, exactly.' That's called humbling yourself before the Lord.'** Fortunately for Naaman, he obeyed the Lord and on the seventh time under the water he came up completely healed.' Was there some special power in the water?' No.' The healing came from God and it was given to Naaman as a reward for his willingness to trust God.' Naaman obeyed God quickly and completely and God blessed him for his faith expressed in obedience.' What if Naaman had played a game with God and only dipped down in the water six times?' Naaman wouldn't have been healed.' It was on coming out of the water the seventh time that Naaman was healed.' We have to learn to obey God completely.

In 1990 there was a man who opened up a video store in California.' He decided at the time to carry adult videos since they accounted for 30% of video rental revenues.' It wasn't long afterward that he began to look seriously at the Christian faith and he even joined a church.' God was working on him; changing his heart.' He said to his wife, **'How can I ask God to help our store when I'm doing something through that store that I know he doesn't like?' How can I expect God to bless me when I know I'm doing something he doesn't want me to do?' I've got to get rid of those adult videos.'** The man went to his business partners and told them.' They said, 'What?' Are you crazy?' We depend on that income.' He told them what he told his wife.' He said, **'We can't expect God to bless us if we're not willing to obey Him.'**

The first weekend without the adult videos a really strange thing happened.' The store was flooded with new customers.' The man couldn't figure out why.' He finally asked one of the new customers and the guy said, **'I heard about your decision to remove the adult videos from your store and I wanted to support you.'** Apparently the pastor at the man's church was telling people about this man's decision to obey God completely and the people of the church were so excited they came out to support him.' God was rewarding this man for his faith expressed in his obedience.' The support he received from the Christian community more than made up for the loss of sales from adult videos.' That's the people of God at their best ' pulling together to support faithful obedience.'

There's a **THIRD** thing you should know about obedience before you can claim God's promised blessings.' **WE ARE TO OBEY GOD JOYFULLY.**' Psalm 100:2 says, **'Obey Him gladly.'** In Psalm 119:16 we really get a glimpse into David's heart for God when he says to God, **'I enjoy obeying your commands.'** Just a little further in that chapter David declares to God, **'I find pleasure in obeying your commands.'** Now why would that be?' There are three reasons.' **One**, David found joy in doing what God commanded because he experienced fewer problems when He did.' His life went smoother when He obeyed God.' **Second**, he found it a pleasure to do what God commanded because he knew he could look forward to the blessings that would follow.' He knew God would not disappoint him.' **Third**, he found great pleasure in obeying God because it gave him a way to express his love for God.' Jesus says, **'If you love me you will obey my commandments.'** 'We cannot claim to love God and refuse to obey Him.' In 1<sup>st</sup> John chapter five we read, **'Loving God means doing what He tells us to do.'** (1<sup>st</sup> John 5:3)

If you want the blessings of God in your life you need to obey God immediately, completely and joyfully.’ There is one more thing to know about obedience.’ If you want God’s blessings in your life **YOU NEED TO OBEY GOD CONTINUALLY**. ‘

The Bible talks about life as a race.’ But it’s is not a sprint.’ It’s not a 50-yard dash.’ Life is much more like a marathon.’ We’ve got to run the race to the finish line.’ We've got to continue to the end.’ If you love God then you need to express that love in obedience to him and your obedience needs to be continual ‘ not sporadic.’ David understood this when he said, ***‘I am determined to obey You until I die.’*** (Psalm 119:112) ‘We’ve got to be people who go the distance.’

Have you made the decision to be that kind of person ‘ one who is willing to go the distance?’ Have you told God that you are determined to obey Him until you die?’ That’s the kind of person God searches the earth for so he can bless.’ David was incredibly blessed by God in his lifetime.’ He is referred to as ***‘a man after God’s own heart.’*** Why? -Because he understood the relationship between obedience and faith.’ He cried out to God, ***‘Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord.’ As long as I live I will wholeheartedly obey you.’*** (Psalm 119:33) ‘If you want God’s blessings in your life then make that your prayer.’

**When we obey God immediately, completely, joyfully and continually we can claim his blessings for our lives.’**