

Consequence of the Obedience¹

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Acts

5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him.

Philippians

2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

2 Thessalonians

1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

As always, we gathered here today to let as many people as possible know about Jesus, rather than to study the Bible. What kind of man is Jesus? He is incomparable to anyone else. There is no pretense in Jesus. He can be trusted in any circumstances. Jesus, not only understands us, He loves each one of us from the bottom of His heart. Actually, all humans are in agony and are carrying their burdens. They have lost hope; they are all disappointed and desperate and don't know what to do. This is how humans are today. People are all alone, like lost sheep according to the Bible.

I once met a teacher. He was a man of wonderful character. He said, "It may look like I have made a great success in this world, but I am in agony. I am a stray sheep." This world is, in fact, like one big hospital. Maybe we can say that we are in a large waiting room, in which we only have two choices: to wait for the death [shi] or to wait for the Lord [shu].

These two choices are extremely different from each other. Disciples of Jesus had so many great experiences. They were given the wonderful privilege of spend time with Jesus for three and half years, day and night. Later, they said, "We saw the glory of the Lord." What is the glory of the Lord?

It is the manifest presence of the Lord. It is the most important thing for us to experience His presence, isn't it? The people of Israel could see the glory of the Lord very often. It is written in Exodus, in the early part of the Bible:

Exodus

40:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

40:16 Thus did Moses. according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.

What was the consequence of this?

40:34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

"The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." We can see from this verse how the tabernacle of the Lord built by the Israelis was filled with the glory of God. There are other similar descriptions in many parts of the Bible. For example, we see similar words in the First Book of Kings, chapter 8. This time, it is not the tabernacle Moses built, but the temple built by King Solomon.

1 Kings

8:11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud. for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

The glory of the Lord is, after all, nothing but His clear presence, as I just mentioned. It is also written in chapter 44 of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel

44:4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house. and I looked, and, look, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. and I fell upon my face.

[In fact, he worshiped.]

Disciples of Jesus had exactly the same experience, as they testified in John 1:16: "*We have all received one gracious gift after another from his abundance.*"

Believers in the early churches were regarded with hostility and persecuted in the Roman Empire of those times. Brother and sisters of those times chose to die rather than to make a compromise. No human should be worshiped. They insisted that it was only God that they worshiped—God who created and still governs the Heavens and Earth.

One of the very first men who showed strong determination like this was Stephen. When Stephen was persecuted by those heartless multitudes, the glory of God was revealed through him, and Jesus was seen standing on the right hand of the God, as is stated in the Bible. After all, Stephen too saw the glory of the Lord. He died filled with hope. In response to this incident, Paul wrote to the people in Thessaloniki:

1 Thessalonians

2:11 As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children,

2:12 That you would walk worthy of God, who has called you to his kingdom and glory.

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As we can see from these verses, the Lord God is inviting us to His kingdom and its glory. Why did the glory of the Lord fill the tabernacle built by Moses? How was the glory of the Lord Jesus revealed to the disciples? Why could Stephen see the glory of the Lord?

The Bible says that we are called into “His kingdom and glory.” Then how do we see His glory? I guess that the answer can be found in Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 3:

Hebrew

1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

It is written that Jesus is nothing but the light that shines the glory of God. Let's look at another verse:

1Peter

4:14 If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you. For the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

Here, the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of glory. These two verses provide the answer to our question, which is that the manifest presence of the Lord revealed to us is the glory of the Lord.

Jesus came down to this world from heaven to live among us, as the shining light from the glory of God. When disciples saw this they were filled with joy and confessed that they saw the glory of God. The Holy Spirit of the Lord God was falling down on Jesus forever and a day. Why was that? Jesus was the one who satisfied the will of His Father God. Jesus changes us from the inside to the image of Himself. We see the glory of the Lord more and more as we come to look more like Him. The Lord urges us to see His glory, as this is exactly what the Lord wants from us.

Let's quickly think about three important points.

Firstly, the importance and significance of obeying the Lord. Secondly, the consequence of obedience and disobedience. And thirdly, the requirement of true faith.

1. Importance of Obedience

To begin with, I would like to think together with you about the importance of obedience to the Lord. Why is it so important to obey the Lord?

It is important because Jesus has to let us know His presence, and He wants to manifest His glory to us.

The glory of the Father God is revealed through our obedience. If you obey Jesus, you will see the glory of the Lord. If we obey Jesus whenever He talks to us, we will be able to experience the presence of the Lord, and we will see the glory of the Lord.

In our daily lives, the Lord whispers into our ears, “You can't do this, you can't do that, but you have to do this.” If we obey every single whisper sincerely, no matter how low the voice is, the Lord will reveal His glory. This glory will lead us to the certainty that “the Lord is with us”—the certainty that allows us to rest in limitless peace and joy. When you follow Jesus obediently, you too can experience the presence and glory of Jesus. Let us contemplate this fact through five examples from the Bible.

These examples include Moses, the disciples of Jesus, Martha, Ananias and Peter. Let's look at each one of them quickly.

Let's begin with Moses, who was truly loyal to the Lord. It is recorded in many parts of the Old Scripture that Moses did this and Moses did that as the Lord commanded Him. Let's look at a few verses from Exodus.

Exodus

40:19 And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it. as the Lord commanded Moses.

40:21 And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony. as the Lord commanded Moses.

40:23 And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord. as the Lord had commanded Moses.

40:25 And he lighted the lamps before the Lord. as the Lord commanded Moses.

40:27 And he burnt sweet incense thereon. as the Lord commanded Moses.

40:29 And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering. as the Lord commanded Moses.

40:32 When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near to the altar, they washed. as the Lord commanded Moses.

And as a consequence of this obedience:

40:34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the

tabernacle.

As our next example, let's think about the disciples. The disciples of Jesus could testify that "they saw the glory of God" by being broken down through various experiences.

However, it is also true for the disciples that they could see the glory of the Lord as a consequence of their obedience to the Lord. In fact, just like us, these disciples were not totally obedient to the Lord right after they met Jesus. This can be seen from what is written in the Gospel according to John, chapter 11:

John

11:7 Then after that says he to his disciples. Let us go into Judaea again.

11:8 His disciples say to him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone you. and go you thither again?

They questioned Jesus's decision, saying, "It's too dangerous." These verses reveal the attitude of the disciples against Jesus. The disciples recalled the persecution they had faced in Judaea, which made them hesitate to go back, saying, "Jesus, Jesus, have you forgotten the persecution we suffered? They will try to harm us badly as they did before."

Finally, however, the disciples accompanied Jesus to Judaea. What happened as a consequence of this obedience? Were they persecuted? Never. As a result of following the Lord obediently, they saw the most unimaginable glory of the Lord. It was the miracle of Lazarus, who was brought back to life from death.

The third example is a woman called Martha.

John

11:39 Jesus said. Take you away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, says to him, Lord, by this time he stinks. for he has been dead four days.

11:40 Jesus says to her, Said I not to you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?

The Lord commanded her to remove the stone, but Martha did not obey his words instantly. Instead she said, "Lord, there must be a stench by now, because my brother Lazarus has been dead for four days." It was impossible that he was alive—that was the way she felt.

However, when she finally obeyed the words of Jesus and took the stone away, she saw Lazarus returned to life from death, and walking out of the tomb. She too could see the wonderful glory of the Lord. If she had been disobedient and refused to remove the tombstone, the glory of the Lord would

never have been revealed to her.

The fourth real life example can be found in the story of Ananias:

Acts

9:10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias. and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said. Look. I am here, Lord.

9:11 And the Lord said to him. Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus. for, look, he prays,

9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord. I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem:

9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on your name.

The Lord appeared in front of Ananias and commanded him to go and see the man named Saul. At first, Ananias refused to obey the Lord, saying, "Lord, it is impossible! Saul you just mentioned is the worst persecutor who puts us in chains. I am so terrified to see such an evil man."

However, he eventually obeyed. Then, as a consequence of his obedience, Ananias could see the glory of the Lord. If Ananias didn't do what he was told to do, what would have happened to Saul, who was later called Paul? The great apostle Paul would never have existed.

The fifth example is Peter.

Acts

10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter. kill, and eat.

10:14 But Peter said. Not so, Lord. for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

When the Lord commanded Peter to kill the animals and eat them, Peter wasn't so obedient either. Instead, he said, "Lord, according to your words in the Bible, we are not supposed to eat unclean animals. No way. I would never do what you said."

This time, Peter didn't believe that not only Jews, but also heathens could equally receive the blessing of God. He didn't want to believe. However, Peter finally obeyed the Lord, and when he came to meet Cornelius, who was a heathen, he saw the glory of the Lord and worshiped Him. According to the Bible, all people there, including Cornelius, his family and his relatives, were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

From this, we can draw a conclusion: let us obey the Lord and His words. When we do, we too can see

the glory of the Lord, just like Moses, the disciples, Martha, Ananias and Peter. Then, we will experience and realize the presence of the Lord. So far, we have quickly looked at the significance and meaning of obeying the Lord.

2. Consequence of Obedience

Next, let's consider what will happen as consequences of obedience and disobedience.

What will happen to us when we are totally obedient, or totally disobedient? This is not trivial. Rather, it is an extremely important decision whether we will obey the Lord or not. In other words, we have to choose between two things: to see the glory of the Lord or to let the glory slip away from our fingers.

If Moses did not obey the Lord, the tabernacle would not have been filled with the glory of the Lord God. If the disciples didn't follow Jesus to Judaea, they too would neither have seen the glory of the Lord, nor experienced the presence of the Lord. Without Ananias's obedience, how would Paul's life have ended up? If Peter did not obey the Lord, not only Peter himself, but also Cornelius would have missed out on recognizing the great work of the Lord.

It is our own decision whether we see the glory of the Lord or close the window of heaven. For example, what would have happened if they had refused to remove the gravestone, saying, "Lord, did you forget that Lazarus has been in the grave for four days? He must smell so bad by now." Not only would Lazarus not have come back to life, but people there would not have been able to experience the glory of the Lord.

When the Lord tells us to pay a visit to some brothers or sisters of the assembly, if we refuse to do so, saying, "Lord, this brother committed sins knowingly. That sister makes her job an idol. They haven't even come to a meeting for a long time. There is absolutely nothing we can do for their good," we too will neither be able to let our faith grow or see the glory of the Lord.

In addition, these brothers and sisters will keep themselves away from the gathering, and thus lose their chance to see the rich blessing of the Lord and His glory. Which way do we want to choose? Do we keep being disobedient to the whisper of the Lord and close the door to His glory? Or, do we obey the Lord every day of our lives so that our sincerity will lead us to the glory of the Lord?

3. The Necessity of Faith

Now, let's think about one last point, which is the necessity of true faith. We need to have sincere hearts to see the glory of the Lord. Jesus said, "*I told*

you that if you believed, you would see God's glory, didn't I?" He didn't say, "If you obeyed," but He said, "If you believed." However, obedience and belief are almost the same things. We can find two verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews that explain this fact:

Hebrew

3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

4:6 Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

We can see from these two verses that it was because of their faithlessness and disobedience that the Israelites had to wander in the desert for 40 years after they were rescued from Egypt. In the original language that the Scripture was written in, the words for faithlessness and disobedience were the same. People of Israel were unfaithful and did not believe the promise of the Lord—that He would take them out of Egypt and bring them to the more fertile land of Canaan.

This indicates that unbelief is actually the root of disobedience. Why could Moses see the glory of the Lord? It was because he built the tabernacle exactly as the Lord commanded him to. Why was the Glory of the Lord revealed to Martha? It was because she believed in His words and ordered the stone to be taken away from the tomb. If the stone was not removed, the power of the Lord—who defeats death and resurrects the dead back to life—would not have been revealed.

I would like to point out one thing about these people I just mentioned: They actually did not refuse to obey the Lord. The disciples simply could not figure out why Jesus wanted to go back to Judaea, where they were severely persecuted—although eventually they saw the glory there. For Martha, it was totally beyond her understanding that the dead man who had been in the tomb for four days and started to rot could come back to life.

Ananias could not even imagine that Saul, who had been devoting himself to fiercely persecuting Jesus's followers, would become a man of prayer. Peter could not understand the order of the Lord to eat the unclean animals. We can't understand it, can't think of it, or can't even imagine it; these are, after all, the consequence of our unbelief. Unbelief will ultimately lead to disobedience.

The consequence was that the window in heaven was closed and they were all unable to see the glory of the Lord. However, eventually, Moses, the disciples, Martha, Ananias and Peter could all see the glory of the Lord. Why was that? It was because they followed the Lord wholeheartedly. It wasn't a

matter of whether they understood or not. When you obey, the glory of the Lord will absolutely be revealed to you.

King Solomon explained it this way—actually, he commanded it this way:

Proverbs

3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding.

This looks more like a commandment than a suggestion. *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not depend on your own understanding.”*

Intelligence is the ability to create a concept, the ability to draw conclusions and the ability to make judgments. It is exactly what humans are given.

Nevertheless, we all bury our heads in our hands wondering about our mistakes, unexpected accidents and the stupid things we do in our lives. For this reason, the Lord keeps telling us, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”* We are not to depend on our own understanding, but we are to rely on the Lord alone.

What kind of faith does the Lord desire of us? Faith is an absolute reliance on the Lord God. Contrarily, humanity’s intelligence makes us anxious worrying about our own life, our health and so on, but it always results in disbelief. The faith that the Lord wants from us is to have an absolute certainty in everything that the omnipotent Lord does. In contrast to this, our intelligence makes us feel doubtful and refuses to accept the omnipotence of the Lord God. This is again the manifestation of unbelief.

Faith makes it possible to see someone who is invisible. Contrarily, the intelligence of man makes us anxious and urges us to look for something visible to the human eye. This is again an indication of unbelief. So, to believe in Jesus is to totally entrust yourself to Jesus in all aspects of your life. To have faith means to be absolutely obedient to all the words of the Lord God.

It is written: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not depend on your own understanding.”* Even though it doesn’t seem to make any sense, no matter how absurd and impossible it sounds, we should just obey the voice of the Lord that whispers to us. Then, the glory of the Lord makes all things that seemed impossible possible. Please allow me to read some other verses from Jeremiah:

Jeremiah

32:6 And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

32:7 Look, Hanameel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is

yours to buy it.

32:8 So Hanameel mine uncle’s son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said to me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin, for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours. Buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

32:9 And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.

When the Lord God commanded Jeremiah to buy some fields in Anathoth, Jeremiah didn’t refuse His command, although Anathoth was the land occupied by their vicious enemy, the Chaldeans. From humanity’s perspective, it is just absurd to pay for lands possessed by the enemy. Nevertheless, Jeremiah bought the field in Anathoth.

He did so because the Lord promised him that this land would soon belong to Israel again. We should keep in mind that sincere obedience in our faith life will bring us amazingly rich blessings from the Lord. Shouldn’t we stop relying on our thoughts or knowledge alone, and start to live a faithful life simply following the words of the Lord?

Jeremiah

32:17 Ah Lord God! look, you has made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for you:

32:27 Look. I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. is there any thing too hard for me?

There is nothing impossible for our Lord Jesus. “Buy my field in Anathoth for yourself.” When you believe in the words of the Lord, when you believe that nothing is impossible for the Lord and when you follow the Lord obediently, you will absolutely see the amazing glory of the Lord. If we hear the Lord talking to us with the words from the Bible, let’s just believe in the power of the Lord, who can accomplish anything no matter how impossible it may look, and let’s stop making meaningless efforts to pursue something tangible. Then we will see the glory of the Lord and experience His rich blessings.

End