

Love, the Highest Motive

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“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” (John 15:9 & 10)

The secret of obeying and living an exciting life is found in the above text. This secret of obeying is **LOVING**. If we know how to love, the fruit-bearing in our life becomes a natural process. (John 15:1-10).

THREE REASONS WHY PEOPLE OBEY

1. Obedience Out of Fear

I remembered a boy whom I asked this one day: “Why are you eating your breakfast?” And he replied, “Because my mother is standing there with a cane in her hand, and if I don’t I’ll get the cane.”

You see, the child was afraid of the cane and so he chose to eat his breakfast.

There are some Christians who live their life this way. They obey not because they love Jesus but because they are afraid of going to hell. They have heard sermons about hell; the preacher has scared the life out of them. They obey out of fear and this is not the way to live the Christian life.

2. Obedience Out of Need

If you were to ask some people the reason why they obey, they would answer if they obey, they will have what they desire. They are governed by a selfish need. In Matthew 19:27, “Peter answered Jesus, ‘We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?’”

There are many people who are willing to obey only to get something in return. For example, they will accept Jesus, read the Bible, and come to church to please and impress the one they want to marry, and when they are married things change.

There are also others who will do all that is pleasing to God to be prosperous. But once God blesses them with success, they have no time for God. Their business or children suddenly become more important. They only have only have time for God when they have spare time. These are serving or obeying on the basis of what they can get out of what they do. When they get what they want, their serving and obeying stop. The Bible warns us against the danger of doing this: “Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them” (Deuteronomy 11:16).

3. Obedience Out of Love

This is the highest motivation for obedience.

Why do you obey? Why do you make that sacrifice? Why do you make time for God? Why do you give yourself to Him? Why do you share your life with somebody else? Why do you do all these things? Is love your answer, or is it fear or selfish need? Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

LOVE IS THE HIGHEST MOTIVE FOR OBEYING THE LORD

There are four reasons why is the highest motive.

1. Love centers on a person – the giver – and not the gift.

It is a relationship with a person whom you can and want to please more than you want to receive from him. It is not what you can get from him but how you can give yourself.

For example, read about the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3:17 & 18. They were standing before the fiery furnace when the king said to them, “If you just bow down and worship the image when the music is played, you will be released and you can get up and go home and everything will be all right for you. But if you don’t, we will throw you into the fiery furnace.”

To obey or not to obey? Be afraid of the fiery furnace or stand firm and say, “Lord, my love for you is more important than being thrown into the fiery furnace, and I’m willing to pay whatever the price to please you.”

The three Hebrew children were able to reply, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve will be able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve the gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17 & 18).

Obedience is out of love – what an exciting way to live! It is a life of power with Jesus. How many can add to their speech this phrase, “But even if he does not...”? Let us make sure that love is our motive for all that we do.

Another example in the Bible is a man called Job. You have to know the blessings of Job to fully understand his situation. Read about his blessings in 1:1-3. He had seven sons and three daughters, owned 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants.

Do you know you can be materially blessed and yet be a man of integrity? You can live a life that shuns evil and fears God. Job was such a man.

Then one day one great calamity after another fell upon Job (Job 1:13-20). His children were killed in a disaster. He was robbed of his cattle, and he lost every possession he had. He himself was greatly afflicted (Job 2: 7-10). In spite of all this, what did Job say?

He said, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face” (Job 13:15).

There are some people who will only serve God if everything is going well with them. When they apply for licenses, they must get them; when they apply for certain things from the authorities, they must have quick approvals. Everything they do must go right.

Do you know God has not called us to a life where everything always happens the way we expect them to happen? There is no promise to say that we are free from troubles, persecution and disappointments. In fact, there are scriptures that tell me that those who will enter the kingdom of heaven will face persecution, hardship and difficult times. But in those situations, God has promised us wisdom and strength. The Bible says your faith will be tested. There will be times when everything will not be good news. There will be times when things said about you are not true and there will be times when things are done to you are hard to take. How are you going to respond? Ask yourself for which of the three reasons you are serving God: out of fear, out of selfish need, or out of love?

2. The second reason why Love is the highest motive for obeying is this: God is love (1 John 4:8)

It is godly to serve or obey out of love. Jesus demonstrates His love for the Father by His obedience to do the will of the Father.

3. Thirdly, there is no fear in Love.

I remember a time when I was still in Bible school. That was way back in 1965 when the school took us up to Fraser’s Hill. When I was there, my wife (she wasn’t my wife then) spotted a beautiful wild flower that was growing way down on a slope, and I saw her pointing to it. I took note of that. I also knew it was a risky thing to try to get the flower. But let me tell you this, love know no fear. So when she turned to walk away, I climbed down the slope and got the flower for her. This was to show her that I loved her. There is no fear in love. Today, she is my wife.

God gave Moses the law. Moses understood that the only way Israel would keep the law was that they loved the Lord. Therefore he said to them: “And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul... Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always” (Deut. 10:12; 11:1)

4. Fourthly, Love is the fulfillment of the law.

“The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself” (Galatians 5:14).

WHAT THE ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN A LIFE THAT LOVES GOD?

The answer is found in Romans 12:1 & 2: “Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer as living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

These are the four elements:

- 1. Give God Your Body**, i.e. dedicate the members of your body (your eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet) and surrender them to Him. Be the branch of the vine and yield your members as instruments of the Holy Spirit to see, to hear, to speak, to do what He wants you to. Let our bodies be as living sacrifice. Let them glorify God and not Satan.

2. Give God Your Mind

A beautiful verse in the Psalms says: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like the tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” (Psalms 1:2 & 3)

3. Give God Your Will

This is the part that says, “Thy will be done!” The problem with obeying is our will. We must will to do His will.

4. Give God Your Heart

We are not talking about the organ that pumps blood through your body. We are talking about the heart which is the seat of your emotions. It is our heart that enables us to say, “I love you, Lord.”

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