



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bible Study

OCT 2013

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EMPHASIS MONTH THEME: Learning to Obey

Obedience doesn't come easy today. Personal freedom and individual rights have become the key philosophies of today's society. 'To each his own' is the latest catch-phrase of modern society. This has led to power struggles not just in the public sphere but also within families and organisations. Children disobey their parents, employees resist their employers' orders, and citizens have refused to obey laws. To some, obedience is no longer a struggle for rights, but a perpetual state of the mind. To others, any restrictions to their own rights have to be resisted, often, at all costs. Disorder and anarchy have now become common in many countries, often in the name of freedom and democracy or personal rights. What does the Bible teach about obedience?

This month, we are going to look at lifelong obedience from the point of view of sacrifice.

'Obedience and respect at home prepare the way for obedience to the employer, and they are joined with other virtues that help toward a prosperous career; crowned with a ripe, honored old age. Disrespect for parents is often the first step in the downward track.' - D. L Moody

SERMON DATE **6 OCT 2013**

THE SACRIFICE THAT WAS NOT TO BE
GENESIS 22:1-19

SERMON DATE **13 OCT 2013**

THE SACRIFICE THAT WERE NOT
ACCEPTABLE
1 SAMUEL 15:10-31

SERMON DATE **19 OCT 2013**

THE SACRIFICE THAT LEADS
TO SERVICE
JOSHUA 24:14-28

THE SACRIFICE THAT WAS NOT TO BE

GENESIS 22:1-19

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

This passage brings to the climax of God's ongoing interaction with Abraham to examine his faith and obedience in him. Here, Abraham was instructed to sacrifice his son, the only heir to the promise that Abraham had received earlier (Gen 18:10). This is a challenge of Abraham's faith and his response would demonstrate his complete, or the lack of, obedience to God. With his response, God provided an alternative sacrifice and spared Isaac.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. God's Covenant with Abram (Gen 12:1-5)

We begin at Genesis 12 so as to appreciate the extent of Abraham's faith-challenge in Genesis 22. In Genesis 12:1-5, God calls Abram to go for a walk, a long walk that will change his life, and change the destiny of all people on earth. 'I will show you' (v1) are God's first guiding words. The rest of Abram's journey is one that demands steadfast trust in God.

- a. What sacrifices are involved for Abram to submit to God's call and move out?

- b. What promises are attached to his obedience? Identify at least seven promises in verses 2&3.

- c. Read Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 for an interpretation on Abram's journey to Canaan. What drives his obedience? What kind of future is he looking for?

Ponder: What normally drives your responses toward God's word and will? What kind of future are you looking for? What are your greatest obstacles to a whole-hearted following of God's word and will?

2. Abram's Journey with God (Gen 15:1-6)

Read Genesis 15:1-6. Abram's journey with God goes pretty much according to plan until he does a reality check with God. Did God miss out the centre-piece of his promise? Or did Abram misunderstand God's promise?

- a. What is Abram struggling to make sense of at this stage of his life? What are his options to address those struggles? (vv2&3)

- b. God's guidance to him remains very clear (v4) with the renewal of his central promises (v5; cf. Gen 12:2). How does Abram respond to God at this point? (v6) How could he have responded instead?

- c. Read Hebrews 11:11&12. Why is Abram still willing to stick with God although the centre-piece of his promise seems long overdue?

Share: What are some of the toughest faith-struggles that you have experienced? What questions have you asked God? Why do stick or not stick with God? If you have gone away from God, what then brought you back to him?

3. God Tested Abraham (Gen 22:1-19)

After a great number of years, God finally fulfils his centre-piece promise in granting Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac (Gen 21:1-7). Notice particularly Sarah's laughter even as the community rejoice with them (v6). But Genesis 22 unfolds with a most horrific twist to God's fulfilled promise.

- a. What does God instruct Abraham to do? Why does he want to do that?
- b. Read verse 7b. Isaac's question to Abraham must have been extremely heart rending. Why is it so easy to rationalise and then depart from God's clear instruction at this point? Consider Hebrews 11:17&18.
- c. 'God himself will provide,' Abraham answered (v8). He does not hold back, but presses forward with the sacrifice of Isaac. Why? Consider Hebrews 11:19.
- d. Abraham passes God's test. God affirms his faith and confirms his covenantal promises with him (vv16-18; cf. Gen 12:2-3). What is one life lesson that God wants Abraham to learn?

Respond: For the sake of the Covenant through which all people on earth will benefit, God tested his servant Abraham and found him faithful. What life lessons have encouraged you from Abraham's journey with God? What life lessons are you learning right now in your journey with God?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6)

- Trusting God can be costly; count your cost.
- Trusting God is a lifelong lesson; don't give up.
- Trusting God involves precious sacrifices; surrender to his sovereignty.
- Trusting God is ultimately the key to sharing in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, i.e. Christ (Rom 3:21&22); therefore, the righteous shall live by faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

THE SACRIFICE THAT WERE NOT ACCEPTABLE

1 SAMUEL 15:10-31

GENERAL SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Obedience to God's commandments must be thorough and unconditional. It is important to the relationship between Yahweh and his people. The Israelites were used to the rituals of sacrifices as a symbol of their commitments and obedience. However, in this episode, the prophet Samuel had a lesson for the king of Israel, Saul, and his people. God does not need those sacrifices like gods in other religions around Israel at that time. Rather, the sacrifices that God desires from them must be the sacrifices that come with complete obedience, or else they were not acceptable.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. God's Instruction
 - a. What was God's instruction to Saul about the Amalekites? (1 Sam 15:2-3)

 - b. Why did God give such an instruction? See Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

 - c. What did Saul and his army do? What was spared and what was not spared? (1 Sam 15:8-9)

Note: It was normal during that time for soldiers get a portion of the captured spoils – the more valuable the better. An example of such a split can be found in Numbers 31:27-54.

2. Saul's Justification
 - a. Did Saul think he carried out God's instruction? (1 Sam 15:13, 19-21)

Note: Saul continued to defend his obedience even when Samuel had told him of God's rejection due to his disobedience. (1 Sam 15:19-20)

- b. How did Saul justify himself concerning the best animals? (1 Sam 15:15, 21)
 - i. Who kept the best animals? It was not Saul.

 - ii. What spiritual reason was given for keeping the animals?

iii. What was the true reason that Saul did not stop his soldiers from keeping the spoils? (1 Sam 15:24)

Note: Only Saul sin here – not the soldiers. The command was issued to Saul and he did not pass it on to his soldiers – he was afraid of their reaction. As for the soldiers – the taking of spoils were normal.

3. God's response to Saul's Justification

a. Did God accept Saul's attempt to push the blame to others? Why not?

b. Did God accept Saul's sacrifice? Why? Which is more important – sacrifice or obedience? (1 Sam 15:22-23)

4. God rejected Saul as King

a. Why did God reject Saul as King and grieve making him king? (1 Sam 15:11, 16-19, 22-23)

b. Why did God reject Saul's request for forgiveness? (1 Sam 15:26-28)

Note: The difference between Saul and David (one who is better than you– 1 Sam 15:28): Both sinned as king – but David was forgiven. Why?

- David never disobeyed a direct command of God like Saul did here.
- Saul did not really accept his guilt – he tried to justify his sin or blame others. Even his public act of confession in vv25 & 30 was political in nature – so that he can be seen by the people worshipping God with God's prophet.
- David on the other hand – never tried to justify his sin – he never played politics when confronted by God's prophet. Instead he seeks God's mercy and got it – Psalm 51 is an example of David's attitude when Nathan confronted him about Bathsheba. As Ps 51: 16-17 reads, 'You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.'

DISCIPLESHIP POINTER

Jesus told his disciples 'Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.' (John 14:21)

John in his first letter tells us, 'This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome' (1 John 5:3)

- To love God is to obey him – are we truly loving God?
- What sacrifices have you been offering to God? Is he pleased? How do you know?
- What is one area of obedience in your life that will bring delight to God?
- What is one area of life where you have been 'playing politics' with God?

THE SACRIFICE THAT LEADS TO SERVICE

JOSHUA 24:14-28

GENERAL SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

After the campaign that spans the entire career of Joshua to take the Promised Land just as God has promised, he led his people to a dedication service. He reminded them of their sacrifice to serve Yahweh by not serving the gods of the past, or of the lands they conquered but the Lord who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. The obedience to the Lord is to serve Him faithfully. It was a covenant that was required of them, not just individually but as families and as a community, for the rest of their lives.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. God desires Worship (24:14-15)
 - a. 24:2-13 summarises God's merciful deeds for the Israelites. Joshua then urges the people to serve God (vv14&15). But he leaves them to decide without compulsion. In retrospect, God has always initiates relationship with Israel. Similarly, how did God initiate relationship with you? Did you do anything to approach him?
 - b. In verse 15, Joshua is not urging the Israelites to worship other gods if they do not choose Yahweh. Rather he is challenging their loyalty. Similarly, how does Matthew 6:24 and 1 John 2:15 challenge our loyalty to God?
 - c. Joshua is in fact saying that God alone must be worshipped (Ex 20:3); God will not, must not, and cannot be one of their/our many gods (e.g. wealth, success, power, sinful passion, etc.) – either He is our God Jehovah, God Yahweh, God Almighty or not at all! Consider the command Jesus gives to the rich young ruler and the latter's response in Luke 18:18-24. Now look deep within your heart: which God or gods do you choose to give your allegiance to?
2. God demands Commitment (24:16-21)

If we choose to follow the god(s) of this world, we can end this study now, and pursue our goals like to rich young ruler does. But if we want to follow God, do we know who he is, and what commitment is required of us?

 - a. Identify and list the attributes of God seen in verses 17-20. What does having a personal relationship with this God mean to you?
 - b. What type of commitment is expected of one who follows God (24:20; Ex 20:1-20; Luke 9:23-26)? What does it take to have an unwavering commitment to him?

