

We return again to our topical study entitled back to basics, having considered on previous occasions, how to hear sermons, how to read Scripture, how to meditate on Scripture, how to pray, how to worship, how to keep the Lord's Day, we come this morning and afternoon to—How to obey God...

- I. Who should we obey?
- II. Why should we obey?
- III. How should we obey? [considered this afternoon]

I. Who should we obey?

1. In short we are to obey God, Acts 5:29—"we ought to obey God rather than men..."—that is, God is the ultimate object of our obedience...
2. This of course does not deny that in obeying God we are oftentimes commanded to obey man—for example, wives are to obey their husbands, children are to obey their parents, and churchmen are to obey their pastors...
3. But such obedience is to be understood as obeying God, that is, in complying with divinely instituted order...
4. Thus when a child obeys their parents they are in fact obeying God, and when they disobey their parents they are disobeying God...
5. But to be specific, we are to obey God's gospel and law—notice [1] we are to obey the gospel of God, Rom.10:16—"but they have not all obeyed the gospel..."
6. To obey the gospel is to believe in Christ, thus the apostle speaks of—"the obedience of faith..."—that is, the obedience of the gospel by faith...
7. This is the very first thing that a sinner must obey—he must comply with the gospel demands of believing in Christ as a guilty sinner...
8. He must abandon all other attempts to find peace with God outside of Christ—he must lay down his own merits and find his hope in the righteousness of Christ...
9. Thus without being united to Christ by faith all further supposed obedience is but the empty shell of formalism...
10. Thomas Boston—"Faith is the hand that unites the soul to Christ, and obedience to God is the fruit of that union..."
11. But the gospel is something that needs to be believed by the Christian on a regular and continual basis—it is not something to be obeyed once...
12. Our Savior said, Jn.15:5—"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing..."
13. Thus the obedience I am here speaking of is a gospel or evangelical obedience—that is, it is the result of our being united with Christ by faith...
14. Notice [2] we are to obey the law of God—it is here that much of the contemporary church has lost her way...
15. For having been taught since the mid 1800's that the OT is law and the NT is gospel, they fail to see that gospel and law exist in both testaments...
16. In fact it has always been the purpose of the gospel to enable us to obey the law—or put another way—it is through the gospel that the law is upheld in the life of a Christian [and that in both the Old and New Testaments]...
17. Rom.3:31—"do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law..."
18. Within the immediate context, the apostle has been underscoring the truth that we are justified by faith and not by works of the law...
19. V28—"therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law..."—this is a fact true of both Jew and Gentile (vv29-30)...

20. No man has ever been nor will ever be justified by the works or deeds of the law—but instead by faith in Jesus Christ...
21. But if the law is not able to justify then does it have any value or purpose for the NT believer—this brings us to Paul’s clarification in v31...
22. Notice two things about it—[a] a rhetorical question, v31a—“do we then make void the law through faith...”
23. The Greek word rendered “make void” means “to make useless”—if we are not justified by the law then of what use is it...
24. Paul no doubt is here anticipating an objection—if we are justified by faith then will this not promote lawless behavior...
25. By “law” he refers to the moral law of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments, for the gospel does make void the ceremonial law...
26. The entire ceremonial law, with its sacrificial system, has been finished in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...
27. This aspect of God’s law was temporal and given to Israel for a limited time—it was a schoolmaster to point us unto Christ...
28. But in contrast to this there is the moral law of God which is an eternal reflection of God’s own moral character...
29. This law is identical to that given to Adam in Paradise, revealed more fully in the Ten Commandments, and summarized by our Savior as loving God and our neighbor...
30. Does the gospel make void the law of God—does the gospel do away with our obligation to obey God’s moral law...
31. This of course is a relevant question for our day, for we are being told that Christians have no other law to obey but the gospel...
32. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer—“The entire system, including the Ten Commandments as a rule of life, ceased with the death of Christ...”
33. Such persons teach that a NT Christian is unlike an OT Christian, and has no objective law to which we have an obligation...
34. If we are not saved by the law then what use does the law have—if we are saved by grace through faith then surely the law is made void...
35. And this is precisely what the apostle is here concerned with—if we are not saved by the law then what relevance does it have for the New Covenant believer...
36. Notice [b] an emphatic answer, v31b—“certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law...”—Paul responds to such a thought with a sense of utter horror...
37. How could the gospel ever abolish or nullify the law of God—has God’s moral character somehow changed from the Old to the New Testament...
38. The word rendered “establish” means “to uphold or to put in place...”—it here refers to the obedience of the law through the gospel...
39. That is—having been justified by faith in Christ, Christians are now able to obey the moral law of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments...
40. Earnest Kevan—“...the law is established by the gospel because the believer obtains grace in some measure to fulfill the law. The believer still keeps the law in its preceptive part, and by faith in Christ is helped to a life of obedience to it...”
41. Thus far from rendering us free from any law the gospel enables us to fulfill the law in loving God and our neighbor as ourselves...
42. Thomas Watson—“They who will not have the law to rule them, shall never have the gospel to save them...”
43. Thus when a person becomes a Christian he not free from the law with regards to his obligation to obey it as a rule of life...
44. He is no longer under the law with reference to its condemnation and enslavement, but he is now under the law of God with reference to Christ...
45. 1Cor.9:21—“I am not without law toward God, but under law toward Christ...”—that is, he had relation to the law as it came in the hand of Christ...

46. Are we to believe there exists two moral standards for man—one for those before the cross and another for those after it...
47. Are we to believe that the “law of Christ” is fundamentally different than that of the Old Testament moral law...
48. Thus to suggest that the gospel makes void the law, is to deny the very purpose of the gospel, namely, to save us from lawlessness...
49. Man by nature refuses to obey God’s law and practically regards it as void, Ps.119:126—“it is time for you to act, O LORD, for they have regarded your law as void...”
50. Man by nature regards God’s law as useless and meaningless—and to assume that this is promoted by the gospel is the very height of impiety...
51. The gospel doesn’t encourage us in our lawlessness but it delivers us from it—for through the gospel we establish the law...

II. Why should we obey?

A. Because He is sovereign Lord

1. The first reason behind our obligation to obey God is found in His native authority—we are to obey Him because He is God, Ps.119:115—“I will keep the commandments of my God...”
2. Mankind is obligated to obey God because He sits as sovereign Lord over man—He is the exalted King who reigns over all creation...
3. Thus from the very beginning of God’s dealing with mankind, we find Him exercising His right as Sovereign over man...
4. Gen.2:16—“and the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...”
5. Even in Paradise man was to render absolute obedience to God in light of His complete authority—there was nothing natively sinful in one tree...
6. Adam was to refrain from eating from it simply because God said so—His word was to be the supreme and sole authority...
7. We find the same thing post-fall, for example, Deut.27:10—“you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God...” Lev.20:8—“you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I *am* the LORD...”
8. That is—they were to render complete and full obedience to His every command precisely because He is the Lord God...
9. Man’s obligation to obey stems from His inherent and native authority—He is God, our governor and our lawgiver...
10. Thus failure or refusal to obey God is the height of rebellion—it is mutiny against the almighty sovereign of the universe...
11. It is high-handed defiance, bold-faced insolence—it’s telling God to His face that He means nothing to us—it’s an attempt to un-god God and deify man...
12. Thomas Boston—“We are in a state of subjection to God. He is our superior, and his will we are to obey in all things. He is our King, and we must obey him as his subjects, by complying with all his statutes and ordinances. He is our Father, and we must show him all respect, reverence, and affection, as his dutiful children. He is our Lord and Master, and we must yield him the most cheerful and unlimited service, as is our reasonable duty. He is our supreme Lawgiver, and we must receive the law at his mouth, every law and precept, every ordinance that is stamped with his authority, whatever is subscribed with a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ readily obeying it...”

B. Because He is a majestic being

1. By this I mean the actual character or nature of God demands absolute and total submission from all rational creatures...
2. Stephen Charnock—“There is an excellency in God to attract, as well as sovereignty to demand obedience...”

3. Every attribute in God is reason for our obedience—His justice, righteousness, mercy, grace, love, patience, and goodness...
4. Thomas Boston—“God is the most glorious and excellent of all beings, and the source and spring of all other beings whatsoever. He is possessed of all perfections in an infinite and transcendent manner. Whatever perfections, excellencies, and amiable qualities, are scattered among the creatures, they all unite in him in the utmost perfection, and in him they shine with the most resplendent glory—and therefore he has a just title to the homage and obedience of all his creatures...”

C. Because He is our Creator

1. The fact that God created and sustains us renders us responsible to Him as His creatures—He has a creative right over us...
2. Ps.95:6—“oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker...” Ps.100:3 —“know that the LORD, He *is* God; it *is* He *who* has made us, and not we ourselves...”
3. John Colquhoun—“By right of creation, the Lord has an irreversible and perpetual claim to our supreme love and our affectionate and grateful obedience...”
4. My brethren, it only makes sense, that if God made us and sustains our very existence, then He has every right to expect from us loyal obedience...
5. God stands as the governor of all creation—it is His will and command that determines what every part of that creation does...
6. He determines the boundaries of the sea—the rotation of the planets—the duration of the seasons—and the degree of rain and sunshine...
7. And whenever He wants to act contrary to these things—as when He made the sun to stop in the days of Joshua and the rain to cease in the days of Elijah—creation obeys His voice...
8. Thus there is a sense in which the whole of creation obeys the will of its Creator except man—who by nature refuses to obey the voice of his Maker...

D. Because He is our Redeemer

1. This reason [unlike the previous three] is peculiar to the people of God, as they alone know God as redeemer...
2. While all men have an obligation to obey Him as a sovereign, majestic, creator—Christians have the further obligation to obey Him as Redeemer...
3. Ex.20:2—“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me...”
4. Notice He prefaces the Ten Commandments with the reminder of their redemption, as it placed an obligation upon them for obedience...
5. Deut.26:16-19—“this day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 "Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. 18 "Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, 19 "and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken...” (see also Ps.105:42-45)...
6. Notice there is a mutual proclamation, v17—“today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God...”—that is, they have publicly pledged allegiance to God...
7. V17b—“and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice...”
8. Notice also v18 wherein the Lord makes a proclamation—“also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people...”
9. What is one fundamental reason or purpose behind their being made a special people—“that you should keep all His commandments...”

10. Tit.2:14—“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works...” (see also Rom.8:3)...
11. Notice two things—[a] what Christ redeemed us from—“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed...”
12. In other words, He died to deliver us from a lawless life—He died to deliver us from living lawlessly or as if there was no law...
13. Notice [a] what Christ redeemed us unto—“and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works...”
14. This of course sound akin to Deut.26:18—“today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments...”

E. Because He is our loving Father

1. This of course is another reason peculiar to the people of God, who have been adopted through Christ into the family of God...
2. We have not only been redeemed from our sins and made the peculiar possession of God, but we have been made sons and daughters of God...
3. Mal.1:6—“a son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my respect...”
4. Brakel—“As far as the believer himself is concerned, he not only acknowledges the obligation which devolves upon him as creature, but he also views himself as being in a Father/child relationship in Christ. He thus lovingly perceives how becoming it is to obey this majestic Lord and benevolent Father, so that his affections are ardently inclined toward obedience...”