

Obedience

Is obedience optional or necessary for salvation?

Is obedience necessary for salvation or is it an option that we can take or leave? What exactly is required of us to be eternally saved? Some say that we don't need to be obedient but only need to believe, just know, that Jesus died for us because John 3:16 simply says that if you believe you will be saved. Let's apply this same logic to three other verses that speak of salvation and see the result.

- 1) In Acts 15:11 only grace is mentioned regarding salvation so, using the same logic, it would mean we don't need to believe, have faith or repent to be saved.
- 2) In Luke 7:50 only faith is mentioned so that would mean we don't have to believe or repent or need God's grace to be saved.
- 3) In 2 Cor. 7:10 only repentance is mentioned so that would mean we don't need to believe, have faith or need God's grace to be saved.

Obviously each of these statements is wrong just as it is wrong to say that we only have to believe in Jesus to be saved. From this we can see the error of using one verse as proof text for a doctrine. No sound doctrine is based on a single verse. The fact is, salvation comes through grace, repentance and faith as well as believing. We are saved by the grace of God when, in faith, we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus. All four are essential for salvation. The following is a brief look at Grace, Faith and Repentance -

Firstly, **Grace** is not a magic word through which we are forgiven no matter what. Grace is God's loving goodness reaching out to redeem hell-deserving sinners from slavery to sin. Through God's grace we receive two things -

- First, we receive forgiveness for our past sins. 2 Pet. 1:9 and Rom. 3:25 tell us that our past sins are forgiven however no verse states that our future sins are also forgiven. Rather, 1 John 1:9 tells us that if a Christian sins then he must confess it to receive forgiveness.
- Second, we receive the Holy Spirit to guide us and to strengthen us to overcome future sin. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 tell us that God's Divine Power (the Holy Spirit) gives us everything we need for life and godliness so that we can escape the corruption of sin in our lives. Also, Titus 2:11-14 tell us that God's grace teaches us to reject ungodliness and worldly passions as we wait for Jesus who gave Himself to redeem us from all wickedness.

So we can see that, in His Grace, God forgives our past sins and spiritually empowers us to overcome future sin so that we can be redeemed (freed) from slavery to all wickedness and become a pure, holy people of God because "*without holiness no one will see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14).

Regarding **Faith**, in Hebrew the word for faith can also be translated as faithfulness. So, to a Jew, faith and faithfulness go hand in hand. Where Hab. 2:4 says, "*The righteous will live by faith,*" it could be translated, "*The righteous will live by faithfulness.*" Likewise, where Heb. 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God,*" it could be translated, "*Without faithfulness it is impossible to please God.*" An unfaithful servant cannot please God and Psa. 66:18 says that even his prayers are not heard.

Lastly, **Repentance** for salvation is not a once off act. In Luke 13:3 Jesus told the people to repent or perish and the word "*repent*" is Present Tense meaning that we must continue in repentance otherwise we will perish. Some believe that ongoing repentance for salvation is salvation by works but Jesus commands repentance so it cannot be works and, the fact is, He said that if we don't repent of our sins then we will perish.

From this it can be seen that believing in Jesus for salvation goes well beyond just knowing that He died for our sins. Strong's definition of believe is "commit (to trust), put in trust with" and in John

3:16 the word “*believe*” is Present Tense meaning that to inherit eternal life a person must continue to trust and commit their ways to Jesus. 1 John 2:6 says, “*Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*” The word “*walk*” makes it obvious that believing in Jesus is not a one step affair but an ongoing, lifelong commitment so if we want to inherit eternal life then we must walk in obedience to God, just as Jesus did. The following verses are some examples which speak of obedience and the consequences of disobedience -

1) Eph. 5:3-7 warn Christians about various sins and verses 6-7 say, “*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*” Note how we are warned not to be deceived into thinking we can be partners in sin and escape God's wrath.

2) Jesus gave us a new command to love one another. 1 John 4:20; 3:15 tell us, “*If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar ... and ... anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*” Hating a brother or sister makes us a liar and a murderer and without eternal life.

3) 1 John 2:4-6 also speak about liars saying, “*The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.*” Failing to obey Jesus' commands makes us a liar and Rev. 21:8 tells us that all liars go to the lake of fire.

4) Jesus said, “*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me*” and “*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love*” (John 14:21, 15:10). If we don't obey Jesus' commands then we won't remain in His love but will be cut out of the Vine and burned just as He says in John 15:6.

Finally, in Rom. 6:16, Paul said, “*Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*” From these few examples we can see that disobedience leads to death, the second death, but obedience leads to righteousness. Heb. 5:9 sums it up perfectly where it tells us that Jesus “*became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.*”

No obedience = no salvation.

Our time on earth is short but during that time our eternal destiny is set forever so let's encourage each other to be obedient and pursue holiness which results in eternal life (Rom. 6:22). Amen.

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