



PART 1 - A
UNDERSTANDING GOD'S
CALL TO OBEDIENCE

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God's Call to Obedience

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CALL TO OBEDIENCE

A

“ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
JOHN 10:27 NASB

The Westminster Shorter Catechism poses the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer given is, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Thus, your primary reasons for living are to glorify God and to delight in Him.

**“ Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.”**
1 COR. 10:31 NASB

**“ Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances
of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the
strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion
forever and ever. Amen.”**
1 PET. 4:11 NASB

- I. Obeying God is an expression of your love and gratitude for your salvation and His many blessings, which He has freely bestowed on you.
 - A. Love for God flows from
 1. the *understanding* that you are unworthy of God’s love.
 2. the *understanding* of the *cost* of the Cross on your behalf, both to the Father and to the Son. (Is. 53:4-10)
 3. the *understanding* that you are capable of love because He first loved you. (1 John 4:19)
 - B. Love for God releases you from self-will to submit to His leadership.
 - C. Love for God is expressed in enjoyment in Him and His ways of blessing. (Ps. 16:11)
 - D. Christ reminds the believer that love is a primary motivation for obedience. (1 John 5:3)

“If you love Me, you will obey what I command.”
JOHN 14:15 NASB

- E. Love for God produces a desire to glorify Him in all that you think, say and do.
- II. Understanding your identity in Christ is a key to obedience. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- A. You were adopted as God's precious child, bought at a tremendous cost, which was paid by Christ's sacrifice on your behalf. (Eph. 1:5-7; 1 Cor. 6:20)
- B. You are viewed by God as righteous, holy and blameless because of Christ's work. (Col. 1:22)
- C. You are given the ability to understand the things of God, especially His Word, because the Holy Spirit (God Himself!) lives inside you. (John 14:16,17; 1 Cor. 2:14)
- D. You are dead to sin and alive in Christ. Your old nature is dead and your new nature is Christ Himself. (Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 2:20)
- E. Christ has the ability to free you from the bondage of sin when you believe that, **“... greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”** (1 John 4:4b NASB)
- F. You are provided with every spiritual blessing and Christ's endless resources to draw on moment by moment to
1. overcome sin. (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 10:13)
 2. uphold, strengthen, comfort, sustain and enfold you when you are weak. (2 Cor. 12:10)
 3. make you adequate for what He calls you to do in His Kingdom. (2 Cor. 3:5)
 4. bring forth the fruit of the Spirit regardless of your circumstances. (Gal. 5:22,23)
 5. have deep fellowship with God who is able to meet all your needs for holiness and for Kingdom service. (2 Cor. 9:8)

You are called to obey the commands of Scripture, which are impossible to live out in your flesh. God gives you many character-stretching commands and calls upon your life to *trust* you into a level of risk-taking, which is necessary to *experience* the supernatural life.

To say, **“I cannot”** to many of His commands is an accurate self-evaluation. God has deliberately designed biblical commands to be beyond your ability to obey through your own limited resources. Though **you** “cannot,” God is more than able to perform His works

through you as you yield to His power by taking steps of obedience in seemingly impossible circumstances. The call upon the Christian is to walk “by faith and not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5:7) *Knowing* God and *experiencing* His life being lived through you, is the essence of the Christian walk.

“**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory...**”
EPH. 3:20,21A NASB

III. Being aware that pride is the root cause of all sin is helpful in understanding God’s call to obedience.

A. **Pride** is defined as

1. unbelief or lack of faith in God’s character, commands and promises.
2. belief in the lies of Satan and self.
3. the demand to control your world.
4. the placement of yourself on God’s throne; becoming your own god.

B. **Fears** stem from pride and include:

1. the realization that you have lost control of your world.
2. the potential or possibility of losing control of your world.

C. **Self-protective** attitudes and actions are the result of pride and fear, which include:

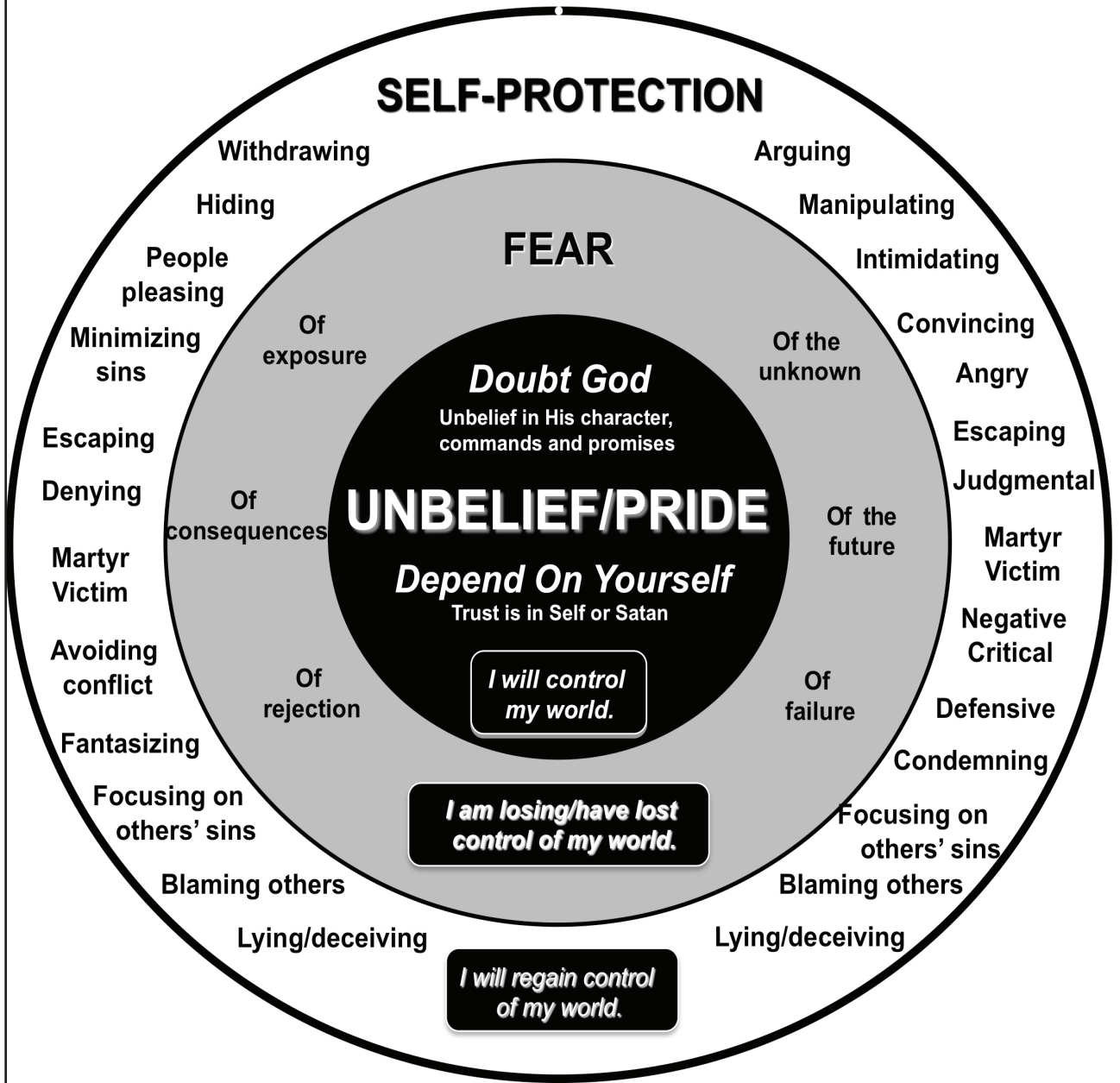
1. the demand to regain control of your world.
2. to regain control by use of your own resources.

IV. Understanding how **pride** can block obedience helps the believer mature.

“**...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**”
JAS. 4:6

A. Pride enthrones self in the place God alone deserves to hold in your life. See *Root Cause of All Sin* diagram.

Root Cause of All Sin



1. "I want to control my world; I have a better way than God."
 2. "I choose to believe Satan's lies rather than God's truths."
 3. "I demand to be successful, fulfilled and secure through my circumstances."
 4. "I demand that God meet my perceived needs through people and circumstances the way I dictate."
 5. "I set the terms of obedience in my relationship with God and expect Him to put His stamp of approval on them."
 6. "I have the right to a happy, comfortable, carefree life."
 7. "I will not be inconvenienced or do what is difficult or uncomfortable to obey God or to serve others."
 8. "I will not be hurt. I will not suffer."
 9. "I will discredit God and His Word, and by doing so, call Him a liar. Then I feel justified in not obeying Him."
 10. "I will continue to give myself permission to sin."
 11. "I continue to say, 'I cannot obey,' rather than yielding to God's indwelling power to act through me."
- B. Pride is manifested in a refusal to handle painful or unpleasant situations God's way.
1. "I will grumble, complain and feel sorry for myself."
 2. "I will throw an internal temper tantrum with God when I don't get my way."
 3. "I will suppress, ignore, minimize painful realities."
 4. "I will remain apathetic, complacent and/or withdrawn in relationship to God and others."
 5. "I blame others for my problems; I excuse my angry, hateful attitudes."
 6. "I will angrily **demand** to know, 'Why?'"

Many Christians are leading defeated, inconsistent and/or complacent lives because they are prideful. The proud, disobedient Christian may find God is literally *opposing* him. (Jas. 4:6) No wonder the difficulties are great, or the Christian life is unfulfilling for those who refuse to believe that **obedience** is the key to the abundant life in Christ!

God often uses His discipline as a tool through which the prideful Christian is brought into submission to his Heavenly Father. (Heb. 12:5-11) God's opposition to pride is always an *act of love* to bring His child into harmony with Himself; then the believer can live his life to the fullest, yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness. It is important to realize that the true believer *will* repent and desire to follow Jesus. (John 10:27; Jas. 4:4-11) If he persists in sin, he must examine himself to see if he is a Christian. (2 Cor. 13:5-8)

“ ...He (God) is able to humble those who walk in pride.”
DAN. 4:37B NASB

V. Understanding the principles of **humility** is another key to obedience. (Prov. 11:2; 29:23)

A. **Humility comes from understanding who you are and who God is.** (Eph. 2:2-5)

1. You need to remember who you were in your natural state, deserving only of God's condemnation. (Titus 3:3)
2. You need to begin to grasp the tremendous cost of Christ's sacrifice for you. (Titus 3:4-7)
3. You need to view your sinfulness in relationship to God's holiness and majesty. (Is. 6:3-5)

B. **Humility is dying to self-will and yielding to the Holy Spirit's control.** (1 Pet. 5:6-11)

1. God directs you to believe in His commands and promises and then to obey as He supplies His supernatural grace.
2. Grace is the power needed to obey God. It is supernaturally given to you through the Holy Spirit, who lives inside you.
 - a. God supplies His grace when you choose to *yield* to the Holy Spirit's control.
 - b. You do not obey Him through your human strength, which will only repeatedly fail, but through the Holy Spirit who empowers you to obey Him. (Zech. 4:6)

“ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
PHIL. 4:13

C. **Humility is denying self.** (Luke 9:23a)

1. It is denying yourself the sinful “easy way out” of a difficulty.
2. It is denying your sinful controlling strategies, motivated by love of self, and instead, choosing to be motivated by love of God and others.
3. It is denying yourself the sinful indulgences of unforgiveness, self-pity, anger, worry, fear, lust, immorality, blaming others, withdrawal from unpleasant people or circumstances and/or demanding your way.
4. It is denying yourself the sinful indulgence of not acknowledging, confessing and repenting of your sin.

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

D. Humility is taking up your cross daily.

1. The **cross** is an *instrument of death*, and you are to voluntarily and daily put self to death so that Christ may live His life through you.

“For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.”
2 Cor. 4:11

- a. Christ voluntarily chose to die on the cross for you. (John 10:17,18)
- b. You are to voluntarily take up your cross by being “broken” of your self-will as the controlling agent of your life.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”
Ps. 51:17

- c. You are to be *characterized* as filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 6:19,20)
 - d. You are to realize that God owns you and has legitimate ownership rights to all you possess – your home, money, family, time, job, material possessions, schedule and future. (Phil. 3:8)
2. The **cross** is an *instrument of suffering*, and you are to be willing to suffer for Christ’s sake.

“ For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

PHIL. 1:29 NASB

- a. You are called to voluntarily suffer for Christ’s sake in response to injustices and to further His kingdom. (Matt. 5:7-10)
 - b. God may lovingly choose suffering as a tool to break you of self-will and to bring you into submission to His will, where you will find intimacy with Him. (Phil. 3:10)
3. The **cost** of *identifying with the cross* is selfless giving to God and to others. (Phil. 2:5-8) Following Christ’s example, you are
- a. to respond with selfless love when facing
 - 1) uncomfortable, unjust or painful situations. (Rom. 12:9,10,12)
 - 2) unlovable people; your enemies. (Luke 6:27-36)
 - b. to give your life for another or for the cause of Christ, if God calls you to do so. (John 15:13)
 - c. to become more Christ-like as you persevere in trusting God in adversity, affliction and persecution.

“ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

1 PET. 2:21

“ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

ROM. 5:1-4

4. The **fruit** of *identifying with the cross* is joy!

“ Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

HEB. 12:2

- a. As you walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit,
 - 1) your focus is changed from a preoccupation with self to focusing on God and others.
 - 2) Christ's Spirit produces His fruit in you: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:16-26)
- b. When suffering deepens your dependency upon the Living Lord, your fellowship with Him is intimate, sweet and joyful. (Ps. 126:5)

“ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings...”
PHIL. 3:10

“ THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BROKEN IN WEALTH, BROKEN IN SELF-WILL, AND BROKEN IN THEIR AMBITIONS, AND BROKEN IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL IDEALS, AND BROKEN IN WORLDLY REPUTATION, AND BROKEN IN THEIR AFFECTIONS, AND BROKEN IN HEALTH; THOSE WHO ARE DESPISED AND SEEM UTTERLY FORLORN AND HELPLESS, THE HOLY GHOST IS SEIZING UPON, AND USING FOR GOD'S GLORY.”
 UNKNOWN

E. Humility is following Christ.

- 1. *Listening to His voice* by responding to His Word and His Spirit (John 10:27)
- 2. *Focusing on being grateful* and giving thanks for His wondrous gifts to you, rather than grumbling and complaining about difficulties and losses (Phil. 2:14,15; 1 Thess. 5:18)
- 3. *Surrendering your rights* to Him, just as Christ yielded all His rights, realizing you do not deserve them nor do you have a just claim to them
- 4. *Surrendering control* over people and circumstances to God's control
- 5. *Accepting difficult circumstances* and people in your life as God's will for you

“ ...those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”
1 PET. 4:19

- 6. *Choosing to believe* His commands are designed for your best interest and to trust in His unfailing promises

7. *Obeying* His commands in your thinking, attitudes and actions and learning biblical tools to solve problems God's way
8. *Learning to wait* on the Lord for His timing (Ps. 37:7)
9. *Being willing to grow spiritually* beyond your "comfort zones" to serve God and others sacrificially

The command of Jesus is hard, unutterably hard, for those who try to resist it. But for those who willingly submit, the yoke is easy, and the burden is light.¹ --Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

PHIL. 2:5-8

- VI. Understanding Satan, as the deceiver, will try to influence you to disobey God. (John 8:44)
- A. God warns you that disobedience is destructive to the believer. The consequences of sin may be immediate and/or long-range.

“ Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

GAL. 6:7

1. Disobedience to His commands opens the door of opportunity for Satan
 - a. to rob, kill or destroy your relationship to others.
 - b. to rob you of experiencing the fullness of your life in Christ.

“ The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy...”

JOHN 10:10A

2. Disobedience to God's commands is usually the "easier" choice or decision; however, it may lead to bondage in sin.

B. God warns you that destruction is Satan's **only** mission. (John 10:10a; 1 Pet. 5:8)

VII. Obeying Christ is the route to experiencing the abundant life.

“ ...I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly.”
JOHN 10:10B NASB

A. Submitting to God brings forth the fulfilled life. Christ's call is radical, but the riches of His grace produce:

1. the fruit of His Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22,23)
2. a vibrant relationship with the Living Lord. (Ps. 37:4)
3. a vessel of God in a fulfilling ministry to others. (1 Pet. 4:10)
4. a consistent, obedient Christian life regardless of difficult or painful circumstances.
5. the wisdom which only comes from God.

“ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”
JAS. 3:17

B. Following God is often, initially, the “hard” choice, but it leads to freedom, as you are spiritually and emotionally released from the bondages of sin. (John 8:31,32)

“ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.”
JAS. 1:25

C. Persevering in obedience through the power of His Spirit, releases you from being controlled by unpleasant circumstances even though you may be called to endure them. You can rise above your circumstances through God's power and grace. (Gal. 6:9)

“ No temptation has overtaken you but such is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”
1 CoR. 10:13 NASB

- D. Remembering to put your present life in the perspective of eternity is necessary for your growth in Christ. You are a citizen of heaven just passing through this earthly existence. (Phil. 3:20; John 14:2)

“ WE ARE NOT CITIZENS OF THIS WORLD TRYING TO MAKE OUR WAY TO HEAVEN; WE ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN TRYING TO MAKE OUR WAY THROUGH THIS WORLD. THAT RADICAL CHRISTIAN INSIGHT CAN BE LIFE-CHANGING. WE ARE NOT TO LIVE SO AS TO EARN GOD'S LOVE, INHERIT HEAVEN, AND PURCHASE OUR SALVATION. ALL THOSE ARE GIVEN TO US AS GIFTS; GIFTS BOUGHT BY JESUS ON THE CROSS AND HANDED OVER TO US. WE ARE TO LIVE AS GOD'S REDEEMED, AS HEIRS OF HEAVEN, AND AS CITIZENS OF ANOTHER LAND: THE KINGDOM OF GOD...WE LIVE AS THOSE WHO ARE ON A JOURNEY HOME; A HOME WE KNOW WILL HAVE THE LIGHTS ON AND THE DOOR OPEN AND OUR FATHER WAITING FOR US WHEN WE ARRIVE. THAT MEANS IN ALL ADVERSITY OUR WORSHIP OF GOD IS JOYFUL, OUR LIFE IS HOPEFUL, OUR FUTURE IS SECURE. THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN LOSE ON EARTH THAT CAN ROB US OF THE TREASURES GOD HAS GIVEN US AND WILL GIVE US.”²
JAN KARON