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"I DESIRE OBEDIENCE, NOT SACRIFICE!"

King Saul had an assignment from God. God told him through the Prophet Samuel to go and utterly destroy the city of the Amalekites. He ordered Saul to kill every living thing: men and women, flocks and herds, and to burn down the city as a "burnt offering" to God. (1 Samuel 15)

You might want to know why God hated the Amalekites. Yes, that is the correct word: God hated them. The people of Amalek set themselves to destroy the purpose of God on the earth by destroying His chosen people, exactly as Hitler did when he set out to destroy Jews (and Christians). The Amalekites attacked the Israelites when they were coming out of Egypt. The Israelites were weak and defenseless, and Amalek tried to destroy them. That was the occasion when Moses went to the top of a mountain, prayed, and raised his hands to God over the battle down in the valley. When Moses grew tired and lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed, and when he held his hands up, Israel prevailed. (Exodus 17:8-16) So Aaron and Hur held his hands up all afternoon so that Israel won the battle. We need to reflect on this amazing picture of how our prayers and intercession for those in the midst of spiritual battle can call on the resources of heaven. God made an oath at that time: "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Forty years later, God reminded Moses of His oath against the evil Amalekites. (Deut. 25:17-19)

Now, about 500 years later (God doesn't forget), God tells King Saul (to paraphrase): "Long ago, I made an oath that I would destroy the nation that tried to destroy My people and My plan to bring salvation to all mankind by bringing forth a Savior through the nation of Israel. Now is the time. The Amalekites are so evil, corrupt, and incorrigible that the only solution is to wipe them off the face of the earth."

So what did King Saul do? He defeated the Amalekites in battle, but he spared the best of the flocks, and he spared their king, King Agag, and some of their people. (We know he didn't kill them all because some years later the Amalekites stole the women and the baggage from David's camp while he was off at another battle, 2 Samuel 1:1, and the Amalekites are mentioned still later in 1 Chron. 4:43). King Saul makes an excuse to the Prophet Samuel. He says, "I obeyed God. I defeated Amalek's army. I killed most of them. I burned down their city. But my soldiers spared the best of the flocks. It wasn't my fault, it was their fault. And now we are going to slaughter all of these good sheep that we brought back with us and burn them as a sacrifice to God."

God was furious with Saul. God says to him through Samuel: *Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.* Whoa! This is a huge lesson for us, and we need to learn from it.

▪ God says to every man and woman, "You must be born again through faith and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ." Many people respond: "I will join a church and be a normal church member, but I am not going to be a fanatic. I will sacrifice some of my free time and go to church, and I will even sacrifice some of my money and give it to the church." God says, **To obey is better than sacrifice.**

▪ God puts His finger on something in your life: the way you treat your spouse and children, your out of control anger, your addiction to pain medication, or gambling, or pornography, and says, "You must deal with this." But we ignore that insistent voice and decide to start tithing or serving in the church. We reason, God will be pleased with my sacrifice. God responds: **To obey is better than sacrifice.**

▪ Someone may have a gift of working with children as a teacher, and she knows way down deep that is God's calling on her life. But she is offered a more glamorous job or a better paying job and rationalizes that it doesn't matter so long as she is faithful to God in other ways. **Obedience to God does matter.**

▪ A man has a tremendous gift of leading worship, and his faithfulness to God in this ministry blesses many. But he wants to be a preacher and pastor, so he leaves his music ministry to willfully pursue a goal that he is not gifted nor

called to do, and it fails, with much pain to him and his family. **To obey is better than sacrifice.**

You may be thinking, "Wait a minute, Glenn! We live in the dispensation of grace, and God is not a tyrant. He gives us great freedom. Christ came to set us free to pursue our dreams." That, I believe, is truth mixed with lies. Christ came to set us free to pursue His dreams for us. That is the purpose, the destiny, for which He created us, and in the long run it will fulfill our dreams. In church ministry, which is but a small part of His kingdom, Christ has given some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. A teacher will be fulfilled if He is a faithful teacher, but if he tries to be an evangelist or a prophet there will be a problem.

A couple of examples: Rick Joyner met a man who was pastoring a small church who was having a dismal time. Rick discovered that the man had been a gifted and successful surgeon, but the leaders of the church he attended convinced him that God required all truly dedicated Christians to be in pastoral ministry. Rick asked him, "Did you hear God call you to be a pastor?" "No." "Did you feel you were filling God's call on your life by being a surgeon?" "Yes." Rick encouraged him to resign his church and go back to the place God called him. The man could influence countless people for the Kingdom of God by serving as a surgeon.

On the other hand, John Wimber was a talented and successful musician. He could play 27 musical instruments. God called him to surrender his musical career and be a preacher, and his obedience led to the founding of the Vineyard churches, the most godly denomination in history. (Gotcha! Ha!) God is the Creator, the Redeemer. He has a right to do with us as seems best to Him. "You are not your own, you were bought with a price!"

But there are some Christians who are troubled with the concept of obedience. They believe that obedience is connected to the law, to legalism, and it makes them uncomfortable. Let's look at a few places in the New Testament that speak about obedience:

- Jesus says to His followers: *If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.* John 15:10.
- Some quotes from St. Paul: *Sin leads to death, obedience leads to righteousness.* Ro. 6:16; *God is able to establish you and make you obedient to the faith.* Ro. 16:26; *I wrote to you to test whether you are obedient in all things.* 2 Cor. 2:9; *God will render to each one according to his deeds, eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality, but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath, tribulation and anguish.* Ro. 2:6; *The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 Th. 1:8.
- From St. Peter: *You have been elected, chosen by God to be set apart for obedience to Him.* 1 Peter 1:2; *As obedient children, don't be conformed to your former lusts but be holy in all your conduct.; The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who don't obey the gospel of God?* 1 Peter 4:17
- From St. John: *We know we know Him if we keep His commandments. Whoever says "I know Him" and doesn't keep His commandments is a liar.* 1 John 2:3; *Don't let anyone deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous. He who (practices) sin is of the devil.* 1 John 3:7.
- I could quote many other statements from Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, but you can look them up in a concordance if you are interested.

A big question for each of us: Is there something you know in your heart that God has asked you to do, and you have not done it? Perhaps you have been ignoring Him. Perhaps, like King Saul you have partially obeyed God and thought that took care of it. (Partial obedience is disobedience.) Perhaps there is an elephant in your living room: addiction, abuse, anger, violence, sexual sin, but you have been attending church regularly and have even increased your giving. Tilt! God is speaking to you and me today, and He is saying loudly and clearly: "**I DESIRE OBEDIENCE, NOT SACRIFICE!**"

Finally, in a book I'm reading, a certain lady gave the following testimony: She married a man who was authoritarian, critical, and legalistic. Soon after they married he gave her a list of rules that she was to follow. No matter how hard she tried, she never succeeded in following the rules perfectly, and her husband constantly criticized her. After many years, her husband died. (O happy day!) In due course she met and married another man. This man was loving, kind, and considerate. (She thought she had died and gone to heaven!) One day she was looking through her desk and found the list of rules from her first husband. She read through them and was amazed when she realized she had been keeping all of the rules for husband No. 2 without even trying. Jesus said, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*



AMAZING REPORT FROM HAITI

Last October I attended a Missions Conference at Good Shepherd Church in Loveland, the church where I formerly served. Pastor Kent Hummel and the church are doing great, and I am so proud of them! They are a missions-minded church and do a wonderful job of encouraging, praying for, and loving the missionaries they support all around the world. Their missionaries serve in Germany, Morocco, Thailand, Haiti, Israel, Guatemala, the U.S., Mexico, etc.

Their Haiti missionary, Marcel Destine is an outstanding man. He was born into a Voodoo family and was preparing to be a Voodoo priest when he was converted to Christ. He is a pastor, has an orphanage, five Christian schools with 800 children, etc. Marcel shared a story that I had never heard. As you may know, the nation of Haiti was dedicated to the devil by its rulers in 1791. When Aristide was president in 2004, he called a huge outdoor Voodoo ceremony for the purpose of renewing the dedication of Haiti to the devil. But thousands of Christians had been praying, and things did not go as planned. The Voodoo high priest mounted the platform with the intention of slaughtering a pig. But instead of stabbing the pig, he stabbed himself in the heart and died. His son, who was sitting on the platform, leaped up, fell off the platform and broke his leg. No one else would get up on the platform and continue the ceremony. (Wise decision!)

Then a few days ago I received an email report from another missionary in Haiti. About the middle of February, the president of Haiti, Prezal, called for the nation to enter into three days of prayer and fasting. The missionary reported that there was an overwhelming response to the president. He said that the streets were empty, work stopped, churches were filled to overflowing, most everyone was praying and fasting, calling out to God to bless and heal their country. He said the only people who were moving around were teams of Americans (I presume many of them were from American churches) who did not get it, they were wondering why people stopped working to do such a foolish thing as to fast and pray.

God is blessing the Haitian people. But please note that it took a horrible earthquake that killed about a quarter of a million people to get their attention! I wonder what it will take to get America's attention?

A SCARY BIBLE VERSE

Acts 4:12 is a very scary Bible verse:

There is salvation in no one else (than Jesus Christ), for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

This is one of those verses that is a big source of contention. This verse can get you in trouble, it can cause you to be despised, ostracized, even killed.

On the other hand, this verse can get you saved from the consequences and the rule of sin in your life, it can get you delivered from darkness and confusion, it can get you healed emotionally and spiritually, it can even get you into heaven! Be very careful what you do with this verse!



UNMERITED FAVOR? UNCONDITIONAL LOVE?

Does the Bible really teach that God's love is totally unconditional and that we are saved "by His grace, plus nothing?" In one sense it certainly does. But I believe that Biblical teaching has been distorted with terrible consequences for Christians.

God gave His Son for our salvation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." That was a gift. But Scripture goes on, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." There is something we must do to receive that gift: we must believe in Him. As Bible students, you know that believing in Him involves more than just acknowledging that it is true. James 2:19 says that "even the demons believe that there is one God, and tremble!" But the demons are not saved. In John 8:31, Jesus confronts "those Jews who had believed in Him," and in Vs. 44 he says to them, "You are of your father, the devil!" That is a sobering Scripture! Although those Jews believed in Him, their belief was apparently in their heads but not in their hearts, so it was not a saving faith.

At a seminar I attended in Pasadena four years ago, Randy Clark held up a copy of his latest book and said, "Does anyone want this book?" Many people yelled out "Yes!" and held out their hands. Randy said, "OK, you can have it." He waited a few moments and repeated his offer, "I said does anyone want this book?" Again, many people hollered out that

they wanted it. He said, "All right, you can certainly have it." He waited a while and started to repeat his words when a tall young man ran down the aisle, jumped up on the platform and grabbed the book out of his hand. Randy said, "I have just given you a demonstration of the way we receive something from God."

Receiving salvation from God is not totally one-sided, it requires a response of faith from us. When the prodigal son "came to himself" in the pig-pen, he arose and went to his father. The father loved and accepted him, but the father did not come and drag him out of the pig-pen. The son had to "arise and go" to his father. Repentance is "metanoia" in Greek, and means to change your mind. That is what the son did, he changed his mind (he repented) about his rebellion toward his father. The son went back and lived in the home and under the authority of his father. He could not live in the pig-pen and in his father's home at the same time.

Ephesians says "*By grace you have been saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not a result of your works.*" Grace has been defined again and again as "unmerited favor." That is a wonderful definition, but I believe it is an incomplete definition that has led much of the church to destruction. (This is a serious matter I am writing about!) A better definition in my opinion is: **Grace is the desire and the ability to do God's will.**

Hebrews 12:28 says, *Therefore, let us have grace.....by which we may serve God acceptably.*

There you are, God's grace gives to us the desire and ability to serve Him acceptably. And the Scripture in Ephesians, "*By grace you have been saved,*" goes on to say (Eph. 2:10): "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...*" We are not saved by good works, by being good, by keeping the commandments, by attending church, by tithing, by serving God, but we are saved for good works. If a person claims to be "saved" and his life is not changing, he is deceived.

MINISTRY

My friend Fred Feller drove me out to Hollywood on Feb. 21 where we were joined by Lynne Cumming to teach and minister for a week at Hope for Homeless Youth, one of the ministries at the Dream Center. Clayton Golliher, with whom we worked, has been serving God for 30 years in a life of amazing love and sacrifice. Let me share a story he told us: A few weeks before we got there, a group of 20 young people came from Bill Johnson's church in Redding, Ca. Bill has a wonderful ministry of healing, and the people in his church, especially the kids, seem to have caught what he has. Over 200 people gathered to be prayed for by these young people, and there were some miraculous healings. A lady came in a wheelchair. Two years ago her husband, in a drug-induced frenzy, had beaten her with a sledge-hammer. He had crushed her hips and legs, and she was a paraplegic who lived in pain. The kids prayed, God answered, and the lady leaped out of her wheel-chair, totally healed! Glory to God! The Holy Spirit fell, people started getting saved, healed, and delivered from demons. God is so good! Come, Holy Spirit!

Glenn

Web-site: www.glenbrownministries.com

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