



Obedience

Once a non-believer goes from new convert towards becoming a Disciple of Christ, most Christian leadership will begin to change their demeanor and even the message towards these enthusiastic believers. New converts are brought into the kingdom with His love and grace but led into discipleship with a different vibe and tone.

Certainly the goal is to bring believers in Christ towards spiritual maturity by teaching, modeling and mentoring in order to cultivate the value of sound doctrine and character and purpose. Every Christian ministry in the world should have a development process to make disciples and equip the saints for the work of the ministry. However, the problem is Christian leaders struggle to define spiritual maturity; therefore, the process towards maturity is broken by inconsistency in their belief. Instead of multiplying disciples, they are multiplying the very religious notion the Apostle Paul countered so heavily in the New Testament, thus making Pharisees – not disciples.

According to Barna Group, a research conducted on May 11, 2016 stated the following:

- **Most Christians equate spiritual maturity with following the rules.**

One of the widely embraced notions about spiritual health is that it means “trying hard to follow the rules described in the Bible” – 81% of self-identified Christians endorsed this statement, and majority agreed strongly (53%). Even among those individuals defined by their belief that salvation is not earned through “good works,” four out of five born again Christians concurred that spiritual maturity is “trying hard to follow the rules.” (Barna.Org)

Barna’s research proves that today’s Christianity is still a propagator of religion instead of a multiplier of strong leaders and pillars of the Gospel. Most of today’s loudest voices and pillars in proclaiming the Gospel of God’s Grace were not formed within the Christian religious system but, like Martin Luther, were formed in the outcast trenches with nothing but the Bible and the Holy Spirit without the fellowship and support of local churches. I believe this rebellion is the consequence of believers trying to be disciplined towards maturity by “trying hard to follow the rules.”

In my personal life, as I began the road from new convert towards disciple, I was instilled the idea of this type of obedience the moment I committed my life to Christ. I said, “No problem. Just tell me where to sign.” I was then lead to follow rules and keep holy actions. Eventually, this type of obedience became the foundation of my whole belief system as a believer in Christ usurping the grace of God. To my perception, this type of obedience is what would get me blessed by God; it is what would mature me; it is what would maintain me in the favor of God; it was the key to spiritual growth. There’s nothing wrong with following rules but if it usurps the grace of God, it becomes a problem.

Like anything that is not built on a solid foundation, falls apart. Like many today, my life as a disciple began to shake. Discipleship for me seemed to be more about walking the line than nurturing; an extremity on outer actions, appearance, and maintaining a holy facet than inner transformation, relationship and engaged mentoring. The reason is because obedience had been misconstrued. Obedience in true Christianity is not about following a set of rules.

Let's begin to redefine obedience according to the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 9:13

While, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men.

Obedience is important. It is important as a person becoming a new citizen of a sovereign nation by swearing to protect the constitution at all costs. However, those who profess to be citizens and try to sabotage their nation's sovereignty by swearing loyalty to another foreign constitution are called traitors and terrorists.

Obedience is the confession and sworn loyalty to the Gospel of Christ **by believing in Christ and receiving the gift of righteousness.** By default, disobedience is someone who refuses to believe in Christ and/or trusts in their own works and holy living for God's righteousness.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

The notion of trusting in your good works and holy living and calling that obedience or someone who does not live up to a certain standard of living and calling that disobedience is to set a broken cornerstone for developing disciples. All foundation should be in Christ and His finished work.

Notice when obedience is fulfilled, it will lead to righteousness. Again, what is obedience? It is to believe in Christ through the Gospel of His Grace. If you truly believe the Gospel of His Grace, then righteousness is a gift only to receive by faith and not works. Every time obedience is mentioned for the believer it refers to what Paul called **obedience to the faith.**

On the other hand, if you disobey, i.e. do not believe in Christ, you remain in your sins, which will lead to death in every sense of the word, especially in your actions.

There are many who are living in disobedience not because they live a life of sin but because they refuse to believe in Christ and receive righteousness as a gift. These continue to trust in their good works and holy living as a foundation to their faith not knowing that they ignorantly are swearing loyalty to the Law of Moses over the Gospel of the Grace of Christ. The Bible calls these Pharisees.

Those who have believed in Christ and receive the gift of righteousness by faith alone are those who have a solid foundation ready to build strong godly character and be equipped for the work of the ministry to lovingly serve others. The Bible calls these Disciples of Christ.

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