

Acts In Action Training Series



Foundational Lesson 3 What are God's Commands?





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Introduction

The subject of commandments is typically not one that people truly desire to talk about. Most of the time I would say that people view commandments with a negative connotation. People have a desire to be free and to live their lives freely and for most people they believe that when they are under commandments then their ability to do this is hindered. This is also the case with the commandments that we see in the Bible. Many Christians are very quick to talk about the forgiveness and grace of the Lord, but avoid talking about His commandments. However, I believe that if this is the case then this shows that they also do not truly understand the purpose of commandments or the Father’s heart behind them.

As we go through this lesson we will discuss the true meaning of commandments and also why God created commandments for us. From there we will move on to determine why we should obey them. Commandments are not merely suggestions or guidelines, they are truly there for us to obey and follow! Commandments are also enforced. There are consequences for those who chose to follow the commandments of the Lord and there are also consequences for those who chose not to follow them. We will discuss this and work to gain an understanding of why we have these consequences and what they actually look like.

This knowledge will lay the foundation for us to move on to review the commandments that God has given to us in the Bible. The reality is that the Bible is full of commandments and were we to do an exhaustive study of them all we would need many more pages than contained in this lesson. We will however review the two great commandments that Jesus gave to us in the New Testament as well as the commandments that many of us are familiar with from the Old Testament, The Ten Commandments. We will also touch on several other primary commandments that are found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Finally, we will discuss common questions about commandments. Many people, even Christians, will object to the idea of commandments or may be opposed to certain commandments. We will review and discuss several of the common objections and questions that are raised about the commandments of



God. I pray that this text will help shed light on what the commandments of God truly are, why God gave them to us, and why it is important for us to hear and obey the Father’s commands.

Let us pray...

Lord, we first humble ourselves before You and we pray that as we go through this lesson, let it not be human wisdom or understanding that we gain, but instead may we receive spiritual discernment. Lord, may You be the one to teach and may You be the one to show us the truth through Your Holy Spirit which lives within us. Father, we pray that above all things, we will grow closer to You and that we will learn more about You and Your love for us. Father, may our words be Your words and may we experience You in a deeper way. We thank You and we praise You and we give You all of the glory now and forever. Amen and Amen!



What is The Meaning of Commandment?

1 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

A command, in the Biblical sense, is a law that God has given that we are to obey. Just as with the laws of a nation, when those laws are broken, when we disobey the commands of God, there are consequences. If we were to be honest with the way that most people view the word commandment then I would imagine that most would view it in a very negative light. For most people, they would view a commandment as a rule or regulation that tells them that they cannot do something that they would otherwise want to do. They would view a world without any commandments as being a world in which they were free to live in the way that they saw fit and where they could pursue the things that they wanted to pursue without any hindrance. A world with commandments, however, is one in which their freedom is infringed upon and they are bound by the chains of commands. This may sound dramatic but it can be very simple. Imagine someone driving to a meeting and running late. They are on a road with a low speed limit and think to themselves, “if it wasn’t for this speed limit I could go faster and be there on time! Why do we need to have speed limits!” However, we need to take a deeper look at what a commandment is and what it is there for. The reality is, and this is true for many things, the truth of God is in fact the exact opposite of what the world tells us.

Matthew 5:19 (ESV)

Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

A fundamental truth about a commandment that we must understand is that it does not bind our freedom in anyway. Here is the reality: we are completely and entirely free to make the decision to follow the commandment and we are equally free to make the decision not to follow the commandment. There is nothing that is forcing us to make this decision one way or another. There is nothing that is robbing you of your freedom to choose and to live your life in whatever way you see fit.



Your free will is not hindered because God gave commandments to us. This is something that we have seen modeled all throughout the Bible since the creation of Adam and Eve. They lived under a commandment, literally a single commandment, that was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was no electric fence around the tree, there was no forcefield stopping them from approaching the tree, and there was no one standing beside them ready to slap their hands if they began to reach for it. They were not hindered in anyway and they were completely free to choose to obey that command or not. Throughout the rest of scripture, we see time and time again where people choose not to follow the commands of the Lord. Virtually every story in the Bible involves, or is the result of someone choosing not to follow the commands of God.



Commandments do not bind us, they set us free

1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)

But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

As we have seen, commands do not bind us or hinder our free will in any way. So then, what do they actually do for us? The truth is that commandments from God are designed to set us free. In order to grasp the truth behind this we must also understand another fundamental aspect to this topic and that is consequence. Unlike a commandment, in which we have the freedom to choose to follow, the effect and the reality of a consequence is an absolute and unchangeable fact. We have zero ability to choose to accept a consequence or not. We are bound to the consequence and there is nothing that we can do to escape the reality of the consequences of the choices we make.

Consider a very simple example. Imagine that there was a glass full of water sitting on the edge of a table with a sign beside it that said, “Do not push this glass of water off the edge of the table.” The truth is that we would have full freedom and ability to either choose to leave it alone or to push it off the edge of the table. I am not forced to do either of these options and there is nothing hindering me from either. If I were to choose to disobey the command and push that glass full of water off of the edge, what would happen? The glass would of course fall to the floor and break and the water would spill out over the floor. The floor would be completely wet and covered with shards of broken glass. That is the consequence of the action that we had taken and it would have occurred regardless of if there was a command not to do it. Once the action was taken and the consequence of that action realized, we would then be completely bound to the consequence. We could never say, “I do not choose to experience the consequence” because the truth is, we have no freedom to make this choice. If, however, we had used our free will and made a choice to follow the commandment not to push the glass of water off the edge we would have never experienced the consequence of the action and would not be bound by it.

The reality is that commandments and specifically our obedience to those commands, are what prevent us from being bound by the consequences of the actions that we are commanded not to do.

Commandments do not bind us, they in fact set us free from consequences!





God made commandments because He loves us

We now know what a commandment is and also that commandments do not exist to bind us but instead to set us free, but why did God give them to us? Why does He care so much about whether or not we are free from sin and from its consequences? We can find the answer in the love that God has for us.

John 3:16 (NIV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

In the second lesson of this series we learned that one of the fundamental characteristics of God is that He is love. He in His very essence is love and the source of all love is God Himself. Because God is love He has created the universe with love. This love is poured out for you and for me. God’s love for us knows no end and as a result He is not here to simply cater to us or placate us. He loves with a depth beyond any human comprehension or understanding. He truly wants the best for us and He knows that we can never have the best if we are constantly being bound by the consequences of sin. He does not want to see His children cry, He does not want to see His children suffer and He does not want to see His children hurt each other. Each and every one of us is precious to Him and as a result He gave us commands in the hope that we would live our lives in a way that would bring us joy and also demonstrate His love to those around us.

1 John 4:16 (ESV)

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

Let us think of a real-world illustration of what this looks like. Can you imagine what it would look like if a child was given everything that they asked for and their parents allowed them to behave in whatever way the child saw fit? Unfortunately, in the world today, we can see the result of this type of parenting all too often. We see children who are given no rules and no regulations and if they decide that they want to try something or do something, they simply do it. I will tell you that you do not need to imagine this scenario because there are stories on television and in magazines of people who were raised this



way. These stories are told not because the people were happy and content, but because their lives have been ruined and they have either fallen into complete despair and depression, had died as a result of their decision, or because of the pain and suffering they lived have committed suicide. But the victims of these stories are not simple those whom the stories are about. Along this path of destruction, they also hurt and wounded many around them including the ones that they loved. To live on this earth without any commandments or authority is to live a life of misery, suffering and pain. This is the opposite of what our loving Father desires for us.

1 John 5:3 (ESV)

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Our God has not given us commands because He wants to make us slaves or see us without joy. Our loving Father has given us commandments in the hopes that we will not suffer the consequences of sin. As we have already seen, the scriptures clearly show us that to obey is better than sacrifice. Not only is sacrifice not needed when we obey, but we also do not need to suffer the consequences of the sin for which the sacrifice was made. We truly have a loving Father!



God’s commandments show us our need for Jesus

Romans 3:21-26 (NIV)

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

The Bible clearly shows us that, with the exception of Jesus, there has never been a single person who has ever complied with all of the commandments that the Lord has given to us. From the very beginning, in spite of there being only a single commandment at the time, man sinned. Every human who has existed since that time carries the weight of that sin and has fallen short. As we have learned, God’s first and foremost desire would be that we completely obey Him and follow His commands, but He is also completely aware that we are unable to completely do that. The stain of sin has already occurred and on our own we are unable to escape the consequence of it. So, what is it that we can do? If the Lord desires to have a relationship with us, but because of our sin is unable to, then how is it that we can be united in relationship with the Father? The Lord made the way through Jesus.

Leviticus 17:11 (NIV)

For the life of a creature is in the blood and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.

Romans 6:30 (NIV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of God tells us that whenever a sin has been committed there are consequences to that sin. We may experience those consequences in the physical world through such things as a physical injury, a damaged relationship with someone, or the loss of something that we have. However, the most serious



and long-term consequence that anyone can experience is the separation that sin creates with the Father. Sin is death and as we have learned, true death occurs when we are separated from, or not in relationship with, the Father. The cost then of sin is death. God shows us that life is represented by and is actually contained within the blood of those who are physically alive. When we sin and are separated from the Lord, the Lord has made a way for us to satisfy the consequence and come into relationship with Him again through a blood sacrifice. The shedding of blood allows for a substitutional atonement for the sins that we have committed. Each sin requires this shedding of blood so that the one offers the sacrifice may become clean from sin.

Hebrews 10:12-14 (NIV)

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

When we look at the commandments and consider the standards by which we will be held accountable to them, it will be completely obvious that we are unable to keep them. We need to have help, we need to have another way to be restored into a relationship with the Father. That way is Jesus. The Father has not only made a way through the shedding of blood to atone for sin, He has also provided the sacrifice. When Jesus gave His life, He became the One sacrifice for all sin and any who believe in Him and invite Him into their heart will be cleaned. The Bible tells us that it is only through the name of Jesus that we can have salvation and be restored into a relationship with the Father. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. It is to Jesus that we must cling and to Jesus who we must give our lives. All authority on heaven and earth has been imparted to Jesus and He has the power not only to forgive our sins of disobedience, but He also bore the consequences of those sins, the consequences that should have fallen upon us. He is the One substitutional atonement for all sin.

Matthew 27:26 (NIV)

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

I recall being at a church event and seeing shirts that had the words “I am Barabbas” written on them. Of course, they were talking about the murderer and criminal Barabbas who was set free while Jesus, who was sinless, was beaten and killed on the cross. At the time, I remember thinking to myself, “why



would anyone want to be Barabbas, much less desire to tell the world that they are?” However, the reality is that, Barabbas represents each one of us. On the day he was set free he did not deserve to be set free. There was absolutely nothing that he could do to gain freedom from the consequences of his actions. There was no hope for him. There was only one reason and one reason alone that he was set free. It was because Jesus came and took his place. It was only because of Jesus that He was set free.

We are just like Barabbas. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The commandments point us to Jesus because it is only through Him and by Him that we can also be set free from the consequences of our sin. We must humble ourselves and admit that on our own we are unable to follow the commands of the Lord. As the Bible tells us, if anyone claims to be without sin then he has deceived himself and the truth is not in Him. Once we have admitted this we need to ask Jesus to forgive us and accept Him as our savior. Through this process, He will wash us and clean us and we will be restored into relationship with the Father. We can experience the peace, joy and love that can only come from the Father. From this point on we are not only restored into a relationship with the Father, but we also experience the presence of the Holy Spirit living within us. We are now ready and equipped to hear and obey. Of course, even with this, we will still stumble and fall. However, the desire and intention of our hearts will forever be changed.





Why Should We Obey?

John 14:15 (ESV)

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

1 John 5:3 (ESV)

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

This appears to be a very straight forward question and there could be many answers for it. I believe that many people would answer such a question with superficial answers such as “because I want to go to heaven”, or “because I don’t want to go to hell”. However, we truly need to dig deeper to understand not just why we are obeying, but the motivation behind our decision to obey. Let us consider an example to understand this issue more deeply. A parent instructs their child not to eat one of the cookies in the cookie jar until after dinner is over. The parent then tells them that if they disobey and eat a cookie then they will not be allowed to eat anymore cookies for a week, but if they obey the command and wait until after dinner then they can have two cookies. The child thinks about how much they would like to eat two cookies and avoid the consequence of not having cookies for a week so they make the decision to obey and as a result they get to enjoy two cookies after dinner.

On the surface, it appears that this is a good decision on the part of the child and in addition the parent has also achieved their goal. However, the real question that I want to explore here is not whether or not the child made the correct decision, but the motivation behind why the child made the decision. In this situation, the motivation was entirely self-centered. The child did not obey because they wanted to please the parent or show their love for the parent. The child also did not obey because they understood that the parent knew what was the best for them and loved them and cared for them. The child obeyed because they believed that obedience would provide them with the best possible outcome. If the child did not see the advantage that obedience would bring to them, or if they felt that what they would gain by disobeying outweighed the consequences of disobedience, then they would not obey. Their obedience was solely based on what was best for them given the consequences presented to them.



1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

Unfortunately, far too many believers, whether they realize it or not, approach obedience to the Lord and even salvation with this same attitude. If you were to begin to ask believers why they accepted Jesus I believe that, if they were honest, many would say that they accepted because they want to go to heaven not hell and they try to obey the commands of the Lord for the same reason. They want to avoid a negative consequence and gain a positive consequence. The reality is that this motivation for obedience is the same motivation as that of the child in our example. It is self-centered and based on self-gain, self-preservation and self-satisfaction. However, the motivation to obey what the Lord has said should not be focused on us but instead focused completely on Him. If our motivation to obey Him is pure and right then we should truthfully be able to make the following statement concerning it, “I obey the Lord because I love Him more deeply than anything else and it is my heart’s desire to please Him and see Him glorified regardless of the consequences of my decision.” Do you see the difference in this motivation? This motivation is completely God focused and is based on our complete love and devotion to Him.

What we must always remember as believers is that God does not simply see the result of what we do and judge us based on that. God looks at the heart. No matter what the outcome is, if the motives of our heart are not pure and set upon Him and His goodness then we have sinned. For the remainder of this section we will be looking at what the consequences of both obedience and disobedience looks like. However, always remember that no matter what you are doing, do not focus on the outcome and results, but ask yourself “why am I doing this?” Is it out of love for the Father and to bring glory to the King of Kings or is it because you are thinking of something else and seeking to bring glory elsewhere, most likely yourself?



Adam and Eve Set the Example

Genesis 2:15-17 (NLT)

15 The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. 16 But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— 17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

While there are many examples of proper obedience as well as disobedience within the bible, it is hard to find one that illustrates so vividly the process and the consequences as the account of Adam and Eve. Just as in the example we discussed in the prior section of the child who was given instruction from the parent, here we see two children faced with a choice to obey or not. The Lord had created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden to care for it. They had complete freedom to move about and enjoy all that was around them. It quite literally was paradise. The Lord Himself would walk with them and engage in direct relationship with them daily. There was but one rule that the Lord gave to them and that of course was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:1-5 (NLT)

1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” 2 “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. 3 “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” 4 “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. 5 “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

Enter the snake. The snake, or Satan, began to speak to Eve and lie to her about the consequences of disobeying. Note here that at the core of what Satan said was this, if she ate of the fruit then she would gain a positive outcome. **She** would gain knowledge, and ultimately, **she** would be able to be like the Lord Himself. Satan’s work began to turn Eve’s focus from pleasing the Lord to pleasing herself. She began to think about her own glory and happiness rather than the joy and happiness of the Father. Adam, though he was not directly tempted by the snake, was in actuality the one who truly failed. It was Adam who failed to stop the snake and it was Adam who failed to lead His wife even though he knew



that was part of his responsibility. He was to protect Eve and yet Adam was passive and did nothing to protect her or lead her in the right way. One could speculate that as Adam heard and saw what was taking place between Eve and the snake He began to also think about the happiness of Eve and ultimately, His own happiness was to stop Eve.

Genesis 2:6-7 (NLT)

6 The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it to. 7 At that moment their eyes were opened and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Adam and Eve had been presented with two options. They could choose to focus upon the Lord and obey Him because they loved Him and desired to please Him or, they could choose to focus on themselves and pursue the course of action that they believed would provide the greatest benefit to themselves. They could continue to experience the perfection of the garden and the relationship they had with the Lord, or they could choose to disobey and experience what would happen if they did. In this situation, they chose to focus on themselves and they believed that what they would gain by disobeying would be worth it. This exact same process has played out in the life of every human ever since. Each one of us, because we choose to love ourselves more than we love the Lord, make decisions every day in which we disobey the commands and desires of the Lord.



The Consequences of Obedience

1 John 3:24 (NLT)

“Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.”

Once we understand the true motivation behind our obedience we can then start to discuss the consequences. Once again, we must emphasize that the consequences, whether good or bad, should never be our motivation to obey. However, the consequences will always occur. Everything that you do, every decision that you make, will bring the consequences that are consistent with those decisions and motives. We must always remember that obedience to God should never be and in fact cannot be about earning His love. He already fully loves us unconditionally. Obedience is about our love for Him. So, if we do obey and we obey with the correct motivation what will happen?

Luke 6:46-47 (NIV)

47 As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”

The very simple answer for what we experience can be summed up in this way, we will experience the fullness of God. We will be completely free from the consequences of sin and as such be in complete union with the Lord. Adam and Eve had a relationship with the Father like no other human has ever had. There was no barrier between them and the Lord. When they walked in obedience before the fall their relationship with the Father was completed and unhindered. Because of this they were entirely fulfilled. Their need for love, companionship, friendship, purpose and intimacy was completely satisfied by the love of the Lord. This is intimacy that the Father wishes to have with each one of us, however, because of sin this intimacy cannot exist. This is why the sacrifice and forgiveness that Jesus provides to us is so important. It is through Jesus that this intimacy and relationship can be restored.



Leviticus 26:3-6 (NIV)

3 “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, 4 I will send you rain in its season and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. 5 Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. 6 “I will grant peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land and the sword will not pass through your country.”

The consequence of obedience has a major effect on our day to day lives as well. Earlier in this lesson we learned how while sin in this world can be fully forgiven through Jesus, the consequences of that sin must be faced. When we choose to be obedient to the Father and do what He has told us to do we are preventing the consequences of sin from affecting us. If we obey and do not drink much wine, if we will honor our bodies and avoid promiscuity and sexual sin, if we will guard our tongue and the words we say and if we are honest and honorable then we will avoid so many of the consequences that come with these sins and choices. So many people in the world today are so burdened with the consequences of their sins that it is hard for them to imagine that there is a way out. How much better would it be to make the choice from the beginning to heed the commands of the Lord and simply obey?



The Consequences of Disobedience

Hebrews 10:26-29 (NLT)

26 “Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins.” 27 There is only the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. 28 For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to us.”

Before going too far into the consequences of disobedience we need to make several points clear. First, Jesus was sent and died as a sacrifice for all of our sin. No matter what you may have done, what you may be doing right now, or what may happen in the future, the blood of Christ has already paid the debt. When it comes to the topic of our salvation the Lord looks at our hearts and He knows with perfect accuracy where our heart is in terms of salvation. Second, when we state that we should not disobey we are never talking about absolute perfection. The bible tells us that none of us are capable of living a sinless life and that if we believe we are without sin then the Truth is not in us. What we are talking about are the motives of the heart. Are we striving to obey and is our hearts desire to please our Father? Ask any competent parent and they will tell you that there is a fundamental difference between a child who makes a mistake while sincerely working to obey their parents and a child who willfully disobeys.

When we discussed the consequences of obedience we talked about experiencing the fullness of the Lord. It should come as no surprise that consequences of disobedience are the opposite. The consequence of disobedience is that we will be separated from God. In lesson two of this series we learned how true life occurs when we are in relationship with the Lord and true death occurs when we are separated from the Lord. Disobedience results in death, which is separation from the Lord. We see this pattern established early in scripture in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve walked with God. They spoke to Him, they interacted with Him, they had a direct and intimate relationship with Him. They experienced life on this earth in a way that no human being, with the exception of Jesus, has experienced it. However, they disobeyed, and in doing so they sinned against the Lord. Once this



happened they began to experience the consequences of disobedience. Though there are multiple consequences that occurred, the fundamental change was in their relationship with the Lord. The relationship changed. No longer were they able to be close to the Lord, no longer were they able to talk directly to Him, and no longer were they able to have the intimacy with Him that they had experienced prior to their disobedience.

Separation from the Creator is the true and ultimate consequence of disobedience against the Creator, however, it is not the only consequence. As we discussed earlier in this lesson when we disobey we also create additional consequences in this world. When we disobey the commands of the Lord we destroy relationships with other people, we hurt our bodies, we end up in damaging addictions, we find ourselves in jail and the list could go on and on. However, these consequences are not only outwardly, they also affect our hearts. So many people are living with tremendous guilt, fear, remorse, anxiety, anger, bitterness and unforgiveness. When we live with these burdens we can go through life in this world with no joy, peace, or hope and end up in a sad and depressed state of existence. When we live a life of disobedience we end up living lives in this world that are bound by chains, chains that are the worldly consequences of our disobedience.



What are God’s Commands?

Up to this point we have spent a significant amount of time talking about what commands are, what it means to obey them and what happens when we don’t. However, before we can begin to work through the process of obedience we must also understand what we are commanded to do. As was mentioned in the very first session of this series, many people view the bible as nothing more than a book of rules. We now know what the bible is forever, we also have learned that the bible, God’s word, does give us commandments about what we are and are not supposed to do. In the same way that God told Adam and Eve what they were and were not to do in the Garden of Eden, so has He also done for us through His word.

1 John 2:1-6 (NLT)

1 “My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin, but if anyone does sin we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. 2 He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. 3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments.4 If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. 5 But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.”

Most people, even new Christians, know about the ten commandments and many of them also could likely name a few of them. However, there are many more commandments contained within the bible about our actions and what we do. In fact, in the old testament alone there are over 600 different commandments that Israel was required to comply with. Most, if not all of these commandments, deal with a person’s actions and behaviors and were a part of the covenant that was made between the Lord and Israel. Many of them dealt with helping a person remain clean, or free from sin, in front of the Lord and also how a person who had become unclean, or tainted by sin, could become clean once again. With the new testament, and more specifically with the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross, we can be cleaned from all of our sin no matter what we have done. Through Jesus, the Lord has made a new covenant with His people. Anyone who shall believe in Jesus and accept the sacrifice that He made will be cleaned from their sin and be saved from the eternal consequences of sin. This may sound very simple and at this point and it could be easy to say, “So if I simply accept Christ as my savior and follow



Him then I don’t need to worry about any commandments?” While it actually is that simply, the true reality is that we must understand what it means to accept Christ and follow Him. We must always bear in mind what we have spoken about many times, that the Lord looks at the heart and not the appearance.

Matthew 23:37-40 (NLT)

37 Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Jesus made a wonderful summary of the laws when He told us to love the Lord with all that we are and to also love others as we love ourselves. Jesus said that if we follow these two commandments that all of the law will be fulfilled. What we must remember about this is that the Lord does not simply look at our actions to see if the commandment was technically satisfied. The Lord looks into the motives of one’s heart and if the motives of the heart were not pure and in line with the intent of the commandment then obedience has not been achieved. This is why Jesus also told us that even if we say a mean word about another person then in our hearts we have actually done the same as if we had actually murdered them. Or, if a man were to look upon a woman lustfully then he has already committed adultery in his heart. So, if we say with our mouth that we love the Lord with all that we have and we love others as we love ourselves yet we do not truly love this way within our hearts, He will know. If we perform acts of love for the Lord or we care for the people in our lives but the motives of our heart are not pure then the actions will mean nothing. So, then what does it truly look like to love the Lord with all that you are and to love others as you love yourself?



The First Great Command - Love God

Matthew 23:37-38 (NLT)

37 Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

As with many of the commands of God at first glance this seems to be a pretty straightforward and simple command. The Lord essentially just said that we should love Him. However, we must dig deeper in order to understand what is truly being expressed in this command. The reality is that this is the foundational command on which all other commands are based. If we follow this command, then all other commands will begin to come into focus and in fact, we will not need to wonder if we are being obedient because our obedience will be the natural outpouring of who we are.

In order to get a complete understanding of this command we must first understand what it means to love. If you had never been to my home and I told you to come over for a visit, you had better come to an understanding of the way before you leave or you will never reach the destination. The same is true with love. Love is truly an overused word in our world today. People talk about loving this and loving that and others will use terms like “I love you”, “I used to love that person”, “I fell out of love with that”, and yet they have no idea what love actually is. We also hear many people try to define love by saying that it is a feeling, a decision, an emotion, or a reaction. Yet these all fall hopelessly short of the reality.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The Lord has told us and shown us exactly what love is and I believe that the motivation behind each of these descriptions there we can see a heart of selflessness. To truly love means to give of yourself to the other with absolute focus on their joy and peace and with zero concern with self-gain or furtherment. Love can never be bought or earned. Love would occur when someone gives without receiving, when they care without being cared for, when they sacrifice without having anything left. When we have



completely submitted all that we are to the Lord and come to a place in which we are willing to do anything that He would ask of us without thought of ourselves with the sole motivation behind it being our desire to please our Father, then we will fully love the Lord.

John 14:23 (NIV)

23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

It should also be noted that while the love that we have for the Lord is a matter of our heart, our actions should reflect it. It can be easy to speak the words and tell the Lord and the people around us that we love God, but if the actions and the day to day behaviors that we exhibit are not changing to become more like Him each day then the truth is that we do not in fact truly love Him. The Word of God clearly tells us that if we love Him then we will obey Him. We must not be afraid to ask the question to ourselves, if I say I love the Lord, do my actions prove it?



The Second Great Command - Love Others

Matthew 23:29-40 (NLT)

39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

The second great command not only directly follows the first in scripture but it is inseparable from it. You cannot obey and practice one of them while ignoring the other. The word “Love” in this command has no different meaning or less power than the word that is used in the first command. In the context of these two great commands the people that the Father places around us should essentially be the outlet for our overwhelming love for the Father. When we are filled with love from the Lord and we look to those around us we should love them as though we are loving Jesus. We should show them the same love and care that we would show to Jesus were He standing in front of us.

1 John 4:19-21 (NIV)

19 We love because he first loved us. 20. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This command, just as the first, hinges on both our hearts and our actions. We cannot say that we love others while at the same time ignoring their needs and standing by as they suffer. Our example of the way that we are to love others should be Jesus. Jesus did not love others with the thought of gaining anything in return, He loved us unconditionally and without end. In the same way, we are to love our neighbors like this and this will be a sign to all those around us that we are believers in Christ, because of our love for one another.

Matthew 25:35-40 (NIV)

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’



37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needed clothes and we clothed you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

As with the first command the Lord clearly is very serious about this command. He tells us that the entirety of the law and essentially the foundation of the faith is built upon these commands. As we go through our day to day lives we encounter so many people who are in need. Yet, there are so few of us who actually take notice of the need around us. There are people who do not have food, do not have shelter, do not have clothes, and do not have companionship. If we begin to truly think of those around us as Jesus does and we understand the love that He has for them we should start to see them in a different light. The love that He has for them should become the love that we have for them and Jesus did not merely say that He loved them but He took action, the most serious action that a person can take is to give their life for them.



The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:2-17 (KJV)

2 I am the Lord thy God, which has brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.

These commandments are so well known that many people across the world who have never been to a church or come to know the Lord would likely know at least one, two, or even more of them. The reality is that these basic commandments form a solid foundation on which each person can build their lives and as a result, many nations have chosen to use these commandments as the bases for the social norms for their society. Consider for a moment the way a person's life would look if they followed these commands. The reality is that that person would live a life that will be free from the vast majority of



burdens and complications that so many people in this world live with. They would be saved from so much of the heartache and suffering of this world. Now imagine an entire society were to embrace these commands and all of the people who lived there were to follow them. That society would be one in which I believe everyone would want to live

As we learned earlier in this lesson, God did not give us commandments because He wanted to limit our freedom or because He did not want us to enjoy life. These commandments were given because the Lord wants us to live free and joyful lives that are free from the burdens and consequences of sin. If a person constantly lies to their neighbor, or steals what is not theirs, or commits adultery, or violates these commands, their lives will inevitably be filled with negative consequences and burdens that they would not have if they were to follow these commands.

1 John 3:15 (NLT)

“Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don’t have eternal life within them.”

Many people would say that the command, such as these, are the old testament law and since Jesus came we have a new covenant and therefore we do not need to pay any attention to these. We must realize that Jesus told us that these commands have not passed away, but in fact, God looks upon our hearts. Jesus did not only not abolish these commands, He actually explained to us that the true level of scrutiny that the Lord will do to determine when these commands have been violated is beyond that of our actions alone. The Lord looks upon our hearts to see what the intentions of our heart are. With this in mind we should examine our hearts daily to determine if we are hearing and obeying these commands that the Lord had given us. Commands that He had given us because He loves us.



Other Commandments

Matthew 4:17 (NLT)

“From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”

Repentance is at the heart of true faith and belief in the Lord. John the Baptist began to make the call for „repentance in preparation for the coming of Jesus and when Jesus came He continued to teach about it. To repent means that we admit our sins and we turn away from them. Being sorry is not the same as repenting. To truly repent your heart and your thoughts must change so that not only do you ask for forgiveness concerning what you have done, but you also make a decision that you will not desire to do it anymore. Repentance represents a one hundred and eighty degree turn from the path that you were headed on.

Luke 6:27 (NLT)

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.”

Earlier in this section we talked about how God has told us to love Him and also to love others. When God says to others, our neighbors, He does not preface it with, “love those who are kind to you”, or “love those who love you in return.” No, when God says that we are to love others He means all people and He specifically mentions that we are to love our enemies. From the perspective of the world this seems as though it is entirely against logic but in the eyes of the Lord this shows that we have truly placed others above ourselves and that we are desiring to love others in the way that Jesus first loved us.

1 John 4:1 (NLT)

“Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.”

We are to beware of false teaching. False teaching is any teaching that is contrary to the Word of God and His character. In order to know what false teaching looks like and when it is being espoused we must be able to test them. In order to test them we must first, ourselves, gain and understand the



teachings of the Lord. We are not commanded to ask someone who is more knowledgeable than us about false teaching, we should ourselves learn and grow in our relationship with the Lord and our knowledge of His precepts. When this happens, we will have the prompting of the Holy Spirit as well as our own knowledge of the Word of the Lord to help us in determining if what we are hearing and seeing is truly of the Lord.

John 10:27 (NLT)

“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.”

In the new testament we find dozens of references to how those who profess faith in Jesus will hear His voice. As followers of Christ we should always be seeking to hear Him and to learn what things He is calling us to do. Just as a sheep knows the voice of its shepherd so should we know the voice of our Lord. We should learn to listen for Him and we should learn to know what His voice is like. This does not mean that we will hear an audible voice speaking to us, though it is possible and has happened in many believer’s lives. What we often find is God speaking to us through our heart and through the circumstances we are in each day.

1 Peter 5:6 (NLT)

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.”

In the world that we live in today we are told that we should increase in confidence and authority and that we should not allow any to control us. However, the direction that God has given us is much different. We should realize that God is the One who is in complete and total control of everything, including our very lives. Whenever anything happens that is good we should immediately, in humble adoration, give the thanks, honor and praise to the Lord rather than assuming the responsibility ourselves. When we allow ourselves to understand and accept who God is and also who we are then we will understand what it means to be humble before the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (NLT)

23 For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, he took the cup



of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.”

There are multiple ceremonies, or sacraments, that the Lord has instructed us to observe. One of these, and for us as followers of Christ, one of the most significant is the sacrament of the Last Supper. When Jesus was about to go to the cross to die for our sins He gave us a beautiful symbol of what was about to happen. He showed us that His body would be broken for us and His blood would be poured out, just as a sacrificial lamb, in order to pay the penalty for our sins. He then told us that just as He had taken bread and broke it and wine and drank it, we should also do these in order to remember the sacrifice that He made for us and to understand the importance of it.

Matthew 28:19 (NLT)

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Another sacrament that Jesus gave to us was to baptize those who believed. Jesus gave us specific instructions to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We should, as believers, be baptized, but we should also seek to baptize others in this way. This act should also not be limited to only those around us but wherever the Lord may call us to, even if He calls to the ends of the earth.

Mark 11:25 (NLT)

“But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”

Forgiveness is a foundation theme throughout all of scripture. The overall story that the bible tells us is how we sinned and disobeyed God yet He made a way for us to be forgiven. However, Jesus made it very clear that forgiveness is not something that we are only to receive, but it is something that we should also extend to others as well. When someone has hurt us, or shamed us, or treated us poorly we should extend the same forgiveness that we have received from our Heavenly Father to them as well. We must always be willing to review our hearts and ask ourselves are we willing to forgive others just as the Lord has forgiven us?



Luke 18:22 (NLT)

“When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

One of the earlier commands showed us that we should always listen to the voice of the Lord. However, if we listen and understand what we should do, yet we do nothing, then we have failed. Jesus made it very clear that we must not only hear but we should obey Him. We should follow His commands and we should follow Him where He goes. The lyrics of one song go, “Where you go I’ll go, where you stay I’ll stay, when you move I’ll move, I will follow you.” This should also be the desire of our hearts to not only see and hear what the Lord would have us to do, but to actually take action and follow through on what He has asked of us.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.”

Worry is something that seems to be so prevalent in our modern society. It seems that in almost everyone's life there is something that they are worrying about. However, Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians that we should not worry. Instead of worry, we should lift our concerns up to the Lord and we should not only trust in Him, but we should give Him thanks for what He has done in our lives. We should turn our focus off of the things that bring us worry and put it upon the things that the Lord has already done! What a beautiful command and a wonderful reminder that we do not need to worry but instead we can trust in Him.



Common Objections to God’s Commandments

When we look at the state of the church today we will find that there are many different beliefs and theories about what it is that we as Christians should be doing. Many will talk about evangelism, others about teaching, others about social issues and the list could go on. However, as we have seen, the fundamental direction that God has given all those who choose Christ is to obey Him. As we have discussed, obedience will never produce salvation, because no man can earn salvation by works. Obedience, however, should become the natural fruit produced after a person has chosen to accept Christ.

Many people do not agree with this concept, in spite of its fundamental and inarguable biblical foundation. There are a variety of excuses that are used and perpetuated in order to argue against the direction to obey. However, when we examine the root cause of the vast majority of excuses we will see a foundation of self-centeredness. Individuals who will use excuses in order that they may not obey the commands of the Lord are focused upon themselves and what they are gaining. Obedience to the Father has nothing to do with what we gain from it or what we avoid as a result of it. Obedience to the Father does not change or increase His love for us. Obedience to the Father does not earn salvation for us. Many people may ask, “if obedience doesn’t do any of those things then what does it do for me?” This question, at its very core, misses the reality of obedience. Obedience to the Father is not about us, it is about Him. The thought that, “If I obey my Father He will love me more”, is an incorrect way of thinking. The correct way and perspective is this, “If I love my Father, I will obey Him.” Our decision to be obedient has nothing to do with the Father’s love for us, but it has everything to do with how much we love the Father! Do we need to make excuses for why we don’t love the Father?

So many say that they love the Lord yet, each day they consciously and willingly disobey Him and follow the disobedience with excuse after excuse. We must stop justifying our behaviors and making excuses for our sin. What we need to do is hear the commands that the Lord has given to us and simply do what He has told us to do. That does not mean we will do it perfectly every time, but it does mean that when we do make a mistake we repent as soon as we realize what we have done and we will learn from the mistake to avoid disobeying again in the future. We will do this not for ourselves or any benefit that we may receive, but we will do it because we want to please our Father by doing the things that He has asked us to do.





If we are saved by grace through faith won’t God just forgive me if I disobey?

John 14:23-24 (NLT)

“Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.”

This is a statement made that is often made in order to justify disobedience. The truth is that yes, for those who have come to true belief and faith in Christ, no matter what we have done or what mistake we may make in the future, God can and will forgive us because the debt has been paid in full by the blood of Jesus. However, a person who has come into the true relationship with the Lord, meaning that they love Him, would never attempt to, or even desire to, justify disobedience. The difference is truly a matter of the heart.

No single time in the Word of God did He condone, permit, or even imply that sin in any form was permitted. If a person believes that the atonement for their sins, that Jesus provided through His death on the cross, gives them permission to commit sin they are gravely mistaken.

James 2:14-24 (NIV)

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”



As we have established earlier in this series, true salvation comes down to our hearts. One thing that we know from the Word of God is that we cannot earn salvation through our works and our actions. However, there is no such thing as works based salvation, words based salvation also does not exist. We can no more talk our way into heaven than we can work our way into heaven. With that being said, we also know that while we are still in this world and have our fleshly bodies we will also have our sinful nature to contend with. What God requires while we are in this existence is not perfection. What God is looking at is, again, our heart. He does not require that we have achieved perfection and live a sinless life, if this were possible then there would have been no need for Jesus to have come and died. The Lord is looking to see our effort for Him. He’s looking at our hearts and is seeking to see if our heart is after Him and for Him.

One example that shows this in detail is that of the disciple Peter. Peter boldly stood and told Jesus that He would never forsake Him. However, as we know, Peter denied Jesus not once, but three times in one day. There is no doubt that this was sin. However, later on Jesus visited Peter and affirmed to Him that not only were his sins forgiven, but that He would have a great work and calling for the Lord. The moment Peter denied Jesus he knew what he had done. He did not intend to do it and he knew that it was wrong. Immediately afterwards Peter began to weep because he knew what he had done against the Lord. It was with a convicted and repentant heart that He sought after the Lord and for the rest of his life he never denied the Lord again. In fact, Peter was crucified because he was a follower of Christ and according to the accounts that exist insisted that he be crucified upside down because, as a result of his denial of Jesus, he felt he was not worthy of being crucified in the same way as Christ. He was repentant even unto death! So the question is, when we have sinned are we seeking to find a way to justify the act or are we repentant and have a desire to allow the Holy Spirit to change us?



Because Jesus came doesn’t that mean the law doesn’t apply anymore?

Matthew 5:17-19 (NLT)

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Many people will say that when Jesus came He represented a new covenant, therefore the law of the Lord no longer applies and it is only grace that matters now. However, this is a false teaching. Jesus in fact came because the original law was, is, and will always be in effect. God does not allow sin of any kind. Jesus came because God could see that no person would be able to live a life without sin and as a result be in relationship with Him. Unless God made a way then we would never be able to have true communion with Him in the way that Adam and Eve had once had, the way that the Lord had intended it to be. God sent Jesus so that the requirements of the law could finally be fulfilled and that through that, we could be restored to the relationship that He desired. However, while the blood of Christ does provide for the atonement of our sins and restoration of relationship with the Father, it does not absolve us from obeying the commands of the Lord.

Consider a child in a family who has a loving father. Nothing that the child will ever do will cause the father to stop loving the child. Yet, the father still establishes rules for the child. Just as we established earlier in this lesson, these rules are not because the father desires to oppress, to limit the child, but instead to protect the child from harm and negative consequences. The father does not one day eliminate the rules. This is the same truth as what our Father in heaven has done. He will not stop loving us and therefore He has made a way for us to be in relationship with Him again however, He has never simply done away with His commandments.

John 8:11 (ESV)

She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on, sin no more.”



Jesus was very clear in His teaching that those who love the Lord would follow Him and do what He has commanded them to do. On multiple occasions when He would heal and forgive people He would tell them to go and sin no more or to come and follow Him. In one translation it is written that Jesus told the person to “leave your life of sin” after Jesus had forgiven them their sins.

The fundamental question that I would pose to anyone who would make this statement is this, what is your motivation for wanting to believe that the commands of the Lord do not apply? Like other objections to obeying the commands of the Lord the most common motivation is a desire to be able to do what the person would like when the person would like to do it and also avoid any of the negative consequences of the action.



If I can never be perfect why should I even try?

Romans 3:23 (ESV)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:10 (ESV)

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

God is very clear when in telling us that we are in capable of attaining perfection in this world and in this life. Every single person, aside from Jesus, has sinned and fallen short of the standard established by God. Likewise, there will never be a single person will be able to meet the standard as well. This fact is the reason why God sent Jesus into the world and made a way for us to be reconciled with the Father. However, because we cannot reach the goal and live a sinless life this does not mean that there is no point in pursuing it. God is not looking at our result but He is interested in our heart and to see what we choose to pursue with our heart.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT)

I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

When it comes to our obedience to the Lord, He is looking at our effort and our desire to obey Him. He already knows that we will not be perfect and in fact, we are incapable of being perfect while we are still a part of this fallen world where sin has corrupted. But, when we demonstrate our love for Him throughout obedience and actions we are showing that our decision to follow Him is genuine.





Conclusion and Closing Prayer

This lesson has been one of the most challenging that I have written. The topic of obedience is a delicate one to broach in our modern church. We have come to an understanding of the Grace of God yet we must also balance that grace commands that God has given to us. We have talked about what a commandment truly is, we have talked about why we need to obey the commands, as well as what happens when we obey and what happens when we disobey. We have discussed what God’s commands are and have reviewed many of the specific commands that He has given us in His Word to us. Finally, we reviewed a variety of the excuses and arguments that are given as to why it is ok to disobey or even why we do not need to obey at all.

As we come to the end of this lesson I hope that you have seen that our obedience to the Lord is not about us. Obedience should never be about what we can gain or what we could lose. Obedience never determines if the Lord loves us or how much He loves us. Obedience does not determine our salvation and where we will spend our eternity. If these things did depend on our obedience then I am sorry to say that heaven would be devoid of any humans. No, obedience is always about the Lord and our love for Him. Jesus could not have made this anymore simple when He said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Having looked more into what His commands are and why we should obey may question for you is this, do you love Jesus? If you do, obey Him.

Father, we are so blessed to know that You love us so much. We know that You have sent Jesus to become the salvation for our sins and we also know that You have created commands for us to follow. Lord, we pray that we will demonstrate our love to You by keeping Your commands. Father, we desire to hear Your voice and do what You call us to do. Lord, I pray that You will speak to each person who has read these words and they will be convicted to draw closer to You and to obey what You have commanded. May they each be a light in this dark world and may they each be pleasing to You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen and Amen!

