

# Biblical Obedience

by Denny Kenaston

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*Denny Kenaston's sermon emphasizes the integral relationship between faith and obedience, highlighting the heart's role in true biblical obedience through the lens of the prodigal son story.*

**Duration:** 1:22:39

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:8-11, Matthew 6:33, Luke 15:22-24, Romans 6:17

**Topics:** "Obedience"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of the prodigal son from Luke chapter 15. He highlights the different levels of obedience displayed by the son. The sermon emphasizes that the son's disobedience stemmed from a desire to do his own will rather than his father's. The preacher encourages listeners to examine their own hearts and ensure they are obedient to God's will.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. I was thinking this morning, what a safe place to be, that we can receive such admonitions from our brothers, that the pulpit is open and free, and we who live in materialistic Lancaster County can be admonished about our materialism.

What a good and a safe place to be. We've been in Ecclesiastes ourselves at home, and reading over those verses there in chapter 2, we decided, you know, with children who grow up in this area where we live, maybe it would be good if we memorized Ecclesiastes chapter 2, verse 1 through 11. We just said those words this last week.

If you think about it, we Americans are in a very unusual situation. You read down through that list and you think, oh my, that's the life of a king. But you see, us Americans, we have grown up in a world where we all

can live the life of a king.

And basically, we can give ourselves whatever we want, and we can buy whatever we want, and we can relate to Solomon when he says, I built me houses. And on and on goes the list. I think it would be good for us to help our children to memorize those verses, all of them, and come down there to the last one where the man who did it all says, it was empty.

It didn't satisfy. It didn't meet my need. It didn't do what I thought it would do.

And dear children and young people, it won't. It won't. I thank God that we're in a place where the antidote to that which we read is continually laid before us.

The antidote, that which will cure us from that. And that is, fully surrendered, Lord Divine, I will be true to Thee. That's the only antidote.

It is the only safe way to walk through this materialistic society that we live in. I know no other way but to be fully consecrated to God each and every day. I'm also very grateful for the children's lessons that we have here.

Very simple. Very practical. I'm not sure how many churches have had goats in their Sunday morning service, but I'm grateful that we do have very practical children's lessons.

Well, this morning, I want to address the subject of biblical obedience. I want to take a long look at obedience this morning. Biblical obedience.

Obedience is at the foundation of true biblical faith. Modern evangelical theologians have separated faith and obedience at a great cost to the church. And maybe even a cost to us.

Modern evangelical theologians have separated faith and obedience. But if you go to the Bible, you will find that faith and obedience are almost synonymous. They're almost the same word.

And many times, you find the two of them very closely connected together. Paul, in the book of Romans, speaks of the obedience of faith. Interesting that those two would be put together.

The obedience of faith. Looking up the word obedience, I came upon these two words. One Greek word, which is a word translated obey, is the Greek word pitho.

And it means to be persuaded to obey. The other word, which is very closely related to it, is the word pistou, which means to trust. These words are closely related, and the one flows from the other.

Thus, we get the song, Trust and Obey. It's not an accident that the songwriter put those two words together. Trust and Obey.

For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. To be persuaded to obey, and to trust in God, those two flow together. As we put our trust in God, we find our hearts being led to obey.

As we come to God with a willing heart to obey, we find our heart easily trusting in God. These two are hard to separate. Trust and Obey.

For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. Now, the main word for obedience is, let me see if I can say it here, hupakoi. And it means to hear under.

I thought that was interesting as I looked up this word obey. It, first of all, does not give a word of action, but rather an attitude of the heart. And we see from that, the heart of the matter of obedience is the heart.

God looks way beyond the actions that we may do. And we will see this more clearly as we get into the message. But even this main word for obedience, it doesn't mean to do something.

It means to hear with a submissive heart. From this word we can see that the foundation of true biblical obedience is the heart. Maybe you've noticed it in the book of Proverbs.

I have. How many times in the book of Proverbs the father is pleading with the son. And as he pleads with the son for obedience, he doesn't use the word obey.

Today he uses the word, my son, hear the instruction of your father. My son, give ear unto the instruction of your father. My son, attend to my words.

These are all beautiful expressions of the heart of obedience. Obedience is a heart issue, not just actions. This heart distinction is very important as we will see as we look further in our meditation on obedience.

We begin to see that motivations have a lot to do with true biblical obedience. And thus again, God looks back at the heart. I think of the example of the apostle Paul who met the Lord on the road to Damascus.

And the first words that came out of his mouth as he came face to face with the Lord Jesus were words that had the spirit of obedience in them. He said, who art thou, Lord? Who art thou, Lord? And then the next words confirmed his obedient, hearing heart. As he said, what wilt thou have me to do? Jesus did not appear to Saul on the road to Damascus to give him a one-way ticket to heaven.

Paul said these words in Romans chapter 6 and verse 17. Ye were the servants of sin. We can relate to that this morning, can't we? Ye were the servants of sin.

But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Every one of us sitting here this morning, if we've been born again, it is because we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us. It was more than a mental assent to some teachings that we heard.

But we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us. Now, this reflection on obedience this morning can be applied several ways. First and foundationally, it can be applied to God.

Obedience is the foundation of the true Christian faith. Whether we obey, why we obey, and how we obey, these are important issues when we look at our Christian life. So obviously, we look at this matter of obedience, and we look at the fact that it's a heart issue between us and God.

We see salvation. But I want to also note, secondly, that obedience has a lot to do with many human relationships. Children to your parents, wives to your husbands, servants to your employers, all of us to the magistrates that are around us, and even to elders in the church.

Or if you have a school teacher, obedience from the heart applies to all of these relationships. As we move along through this meditation, we will see that these two crisscross each other again and again. Now, let's turn for a reading in the Scriptures to Luke chapter 15, which is where we will be spending most of our time.

In Luke chapter 15, we're going to read the story of the prodigal son. And we want to draw out of this story four levels of obedience. You look for them while we read through these verses the first time.

There are four levels of obedience in this story of the prodigal. Luke 15 and verse 11. And he said, A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.

And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. And no man gave unto him.

Praise God for verse 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found, and they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry and would not go in. Therefore came his father out and entreated him.

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meat that we should make merry and be glad. For this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, this Thy Word lays before us this morning. Wisdom and insight in Your heart. Oh, we pray that You'll break the bread to us this morning and help us to understand Your heart first of all.

Secondly, Father, help us to understand our own hearts. And God, relationships that surround all of our lives. Father, we pray that You'll break the bread to us by Your Spirit, God.

Grant us that grace this morning to see into this passage of Scripture. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Four levels of obedience we see in this portion of Scripture. The first is very clear to us. We're looking at the heart of a prodigal.

We're looking at the heart of a young man who does not want to do his father's will. Oh, we may on the surface look at this portion of Scripture and simply say, he wanted to get his inheritance and go out and live up his own life. But if you look deeper than that, this is not a son who just wanted to go and live his own life.

This is a son who did not want to do his father's will. I don't want to keep my father's commandments. This is the first level of obedience.

Whether it's on the level of God, or whether it's on the level of human authority, we will see as we go down through this Scripture, these two are very closely tied together. If a son rises up, or a daughter rises up in their heart, and their heart says of their earthly father or mother, I don't want to keep my father's commandments, that son or that daughter is walking on dangerous ground. Soon they will also walk away from their heavenly father's commandments, because these two are inseparable in anyone's home.

So whether it is on the level of God, or whether it's on the level of human authorities, here we have the heart of a young man who has closed itself up. A heart that refuses to hear the voice of his father. A heart that has hardened itself against the voice of his father.

Devastation is down the road for this kind of a heart. The other day as we sat in family devotions, speaking, addressing the subject of how dangerous it is to know, to have light, to have received light, to know what is right, but to continue to live in a way that is wrong. We were considering the dangers of such a posture of heart.

This is exactly where this young man was. He knew what was right. He knew his father's voice.

He knew what his father's blessing was all about. He knew what his father wanted him to do. But in his heart, his heart said, I do not want to do my father's will.

You may be here in this room this morning with that kind of a heart. You may be a boy. You may be a girl.

You may be a young man or a young lady sitting here. You may be a grown man sitting here, or a woman sitting here in this auditorium this morning. But somehow, for some reason, inside of your own heart, your heart has closed itself up to the Father's will or the will of those who surround you, the authorities that God has placed in your life.

This young man, we see what he did once his father gave him the inheritance that he had coming to him. We see what he did. But this young man didn't do this overnight.

He pondered a long time before he left. There were many struggles that took place inside of this young man's heart before he finally drew the line in front of his father and said, Father, give me that which is mine. Long before those words came out of his mouth, there were many struggles taking place inside of his heart.

And those struggles were struggles which said basically this, I do not want to do my Father's will. What a dangerous place to be. It's interesting to me, especially in this first point of the sermon, how these two draw themselves together and how that yes, while rejecting his father's will, it eventually led to him

rejecting his heavenly Father's will.

And maybe in the beginning, this young man probably didn't imagine what he would do when he finally left his father's house. He probably thought in his own mind, I won't do this and I won't do this. Yes, I'm going to get all that money.

Yes, I'll have those treasures in my hand that we heard about earlier, but I won't do this with them and I won't do this and I won't do that. But oh, he did not know what he was doing when he walked away from his father's will. And his life began to go down.

And his life went down further than he ever imagined that it would go. And that's the way it is in every one of our human hearts. If we reject the father's will, the life goes down and it goes down farther than what we ever imagined it would.

You see, we have the false imagination that we will be able to control ourselves and keep ourselves in line. Oh, we'll just go a little ways from the father's will. We'll just go a little ways from our father's house, but we end up going much further than we ever dreamed that we would go.

And doing things that we never dreamed we would ever do. The stories are endless of those who chose to reject their father's will and go their own way. And I would just say this before we move on to the second point and look at the other brother.

I don't know who I'm speaking to this morning or if I'm speaking to anyone on this point this morning. But I would just encourage you, it is no little thing. It is no little thing for a child to close up its heart to the voice of its father.

It's no little thing to close up your heart to the voice of your mother. It's not a little thing to close up your heart to the voice of the authorities which God has placed in your life. It is no little thing.

Notice those words. God has placed in your life. And if God has placed in your life and you reject that which God has placed in your life, you reject God at the same time and the path can only go down.

Now, I praise God this morning, maybe I'm only talking to one or two on this point. But maybe there's a boy in this room this morning. Maybe there's a girl sitting in this room this morning.

You're just beginning to imagine those kind of thoughts. Those struggles are just beginning to rise up inside of your heart. Maybe you're one of those who contemplated, well, I'm just going to get out of here someday when I get bigger and I'm going to do what I want to do.

Maybe you've been contemplating those thoughts and God just sent my voice along your way this morning to warn you of the dangers of what you're thinking. It's not uncommon for boys or even girls to think in their mind, I'm going to run away. I'm just going to run away.

I don't like the way things are at my house and I think I'll just run away. Yes, the prodigal, he didn't like the way things were at his house either and he ran away. But oh, he had no idea how far away he would run and how low he would get before he finally came to himself.

You say, oh, Brother Denny, we would never do that. We've been raised in a Christian home. We would never go that far away.

We know what is right. We would never go as far as that prodigal went. We've had training in our hearts.

Oh, my friend, you do not know the depth of the darkness of a rebellious heart. Remember, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. And in rebellion, you walk in such darkness, you will find yourself on paths that you never dreamed of.

That's the first level of obedience. I will not do my Father's will. Let's look at the other brother next in this parable.

What is the level of obedience of the other brother in this parable? For a while, he looks pretty good. But let's look deep into his heart a bit as we check the purity of his level of obedience. His heart said, I have to keep my Father's commandments.

I have to keep my Father's commandments. With him, it is an obligation. With him, it is a matter of have to.

With him, it's a matter of religious obedience. Look at verse 28. We get some insight into his heart.

He finds out that his brother came back and his father received him happily and he was angry. Imagine such a thing rising up in the heart of a son who stayed home, who took care of the things that his father wanted him to do, who was out there in the field day by day, taking care of all the things that his dad wanted him to care for, and now his heart is angry and he would not go in. Therefore came his father out and entreated him, and he answering said unto his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee.

Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. We see this second son and we see in this second son religious obedience.

We can't turn back there, but if you notice the first couple of verses in this chapter, chapter 15 of Luke, you will see that the Lord Jesus is addressing the hearts of the Pharisees who are looking on with disdain as He reaches out to the publicans and the sinners. He's addressing the heart of the religious Pharisees. Obedient? Oh, very obedient.

Clear to the word? Very much so. Keep all the jobs and kittles? They'll do it like nobody else. Yet, nonetheless, it is a religious obedience.

It's an obedience that says, Look what I have done. It's an obedience that says, You owe me something for what I have done and you are not giving it to me. This religious obedience is not from the heart.

It's not from the heart. It's not done out of the right motive. Who knows what this man's motivations were? God does not tell us.

And I believe He does that on purpose to help us to examine our own hearts. Why we do what we do. I've learned this through the years.

God, in His kindness, dashes our expectations to the ground when our heart is moving in religious obedience. When our heart is saying, What's in it for me? When our heart is saying, Look what I have done. God, in His kindness, dashes our expectations to the ground just like He did right here with this son.

He dashed his expectations to the ground. He passed him up and went to the other brother. He exalted the least expected to be exalted.

God did that. And in thus doing, He dashed the expectations of the religious obedient one to the ground. And look at the reaction that comes out of that religious obedient heart.

Anger. Anger. God does this in many ways.

Sometimes He'll pass over us and exalt someone else. Sometimes He passes over us and lets someone else get a name. And through that reveals our own envious heart.

I don't like what's happening in that person. I don't like how that person is getting all of the attention. God reveals our religious obedience as He dashes our expectations to the ground.

Consider this also on a human level. Not just on a spiritual level, but on a human level. Many times we do what we do, even on the human level, out of a have-to instead of a get-to attitude.

What is the difference on the job of the man who works because he has to and the man who works because he wants to? What is the difference between the two of those? Which one do you think will get the promotion when it's time to move someone on into a place of leadership on the job? The one who worked because he had to or the one who worked because he wanted to? Religious obedience. God is not happy with this level of obedience. Though there is activity there very clearly, God is not pleased with this level of obedience.

Though this son is out there doing his work, though he's out there plowing the field, though he's out there caring for his father's things, yet his heart is engaged in such a way that he's looking out for himself and he's being motivated by things which are not right. Much is lacking, though the activity is there. Let's move on to the third level of obedience.

Looking back at verse 17, we find the obedience which flows out of this kind of a heart. I am not worthy. I am not worthy.

In verse 17-19, we see the prodigal coming to himself and he says, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of the hired servants.

Let me be a slave. Here we see the humility of a bond slave. Here we see the lowly attitude of an unprofitable servant who is willing to do anything, who feels unworthy that he would be given anything to do, yet he comes asking, Could I be just your bond servant? Could I just do anything that you want me to do? Would you just let me be the doorkeeper in the house of the Lord? Would you allow me to vacuum the floors? Would you allow me to be the janitor? Just let me do anything, Father.

Father, I am not worthy to be called your son. Would you let me do anything? There is no look what I have done in the heart of this one. There is no you owe me something in his heart.

We can see that very clearly. There is no merit in this man's heart. Obedience from a humble, unworthy heart is all we see there.

Ah, we begin to tune ourselves in to the heart of biblical obedience. Oh, think about it. Each and every one of us could find ourselves in that very place as we realize that God has allowed me something to do.

I think of the words of the Apostle Paul whom God allowed something to do in his kingdom, yet all of his life he never got away from this very attitude right here. He felt himself an unworthy servant, not even worthy to be called an apostle, yet the Lord had mercy on him. There is no merit in this man's heart.

He doesn't have anything to bring to the Father. He doesn't have any good things to give. He doesn't have a lot of talents that he can walk up there and offer to the Father.

He is simply low to the ground. He has nothing to say except, Father, would You allow me to be one of Your bondservants? Yes, now we are getting down to the core, the foundation of biblical obedience. Again, remember the Apostle Paul as he met the Lord there on the road to Damascus and he heard those words coming out of the mouth of Christ, I am Jesus.

I am Jesus. Oh, the power that is in those words. Oh, the revelation of the wrongness of Paul's direction, all wrapped up in those simple little words.

Who art Thou, Lord? I am Jesus. That's all Paul needed to hear. A volume of sin, a volume of error, a volume of transgression, a volume of iniquity is in those words.

I am Jesus. And what could Paul say? But what wilt Thou have me to do? This also applies on a human level as well as a spiritual level. Think about it as you ponder the different human relationships that you find yourself in.

Children with your parents, wives with your husbands, those who have a job and work somewhere. That lowly attitude that says, oh, if I could just be a servant in this place, I would be grateful. I mean, give the boss ten of those, he would never turn one of them down.

Oh, for that lowly attitude that simply says, oh, if I could just be a servant for my boss. Oh, if I could just be a servant and wash my husband's feet. Oh, if I could just be a servant and relieve some of the burdens of the ministers in the church.

You fill in the blanks there with whatever human relationships you find yourself in. The lowly attitude of a servant. But let's move on to the fourth level of obedience.

Aren't we glad that God doesn't stop there with the prodigal in verse 19? The fourth level of obedience, the overwhelming motivation of gratitude and love. What a beautiful combination we find in these words. We have a prodigal sitting there in a pig pen somewhere, eating husks for breakfast, coming to himself and facing the reality of where he's at.

And his heart cries out, oh, if I could just be a servant in my Father's house. What a beautiful attitude to come to the Father. But God doesn't stop there, does He? Yes, we need that attitude.

Yes, that should be our heart. Yes, that's the right way to come to the Father. But the Father doesn't stop there.

Hallelujah. He doesn't stop there. And He arose and came to His Father.

But look what His Father does. When He, the prodigal, the filthy, smelly prodigal, when He, the prodigal, the rebel, the one who was going His own way, the one who was not willing to do His Father's will, when He was yet a great way off, His Father saw Him and had compassion and ran and fell on His neck and kissed Him. And the son said unto Him, Father, yes, that's right, Son.

Don't You change Your attitude? Don't You change Your attitude even though the Father just fell on You and kissed Your neck? Don't You change Your attitude even though the Father ran to You with all of His heart and wrapped His arms around You? Don't You change Your attitude, Son? The son said unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son. Would You just let me be a servant in Your house? Yes, O Son. Don't ever get away from that attitude.

But the Father said to His servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and be merry.

For this My Son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and He is found. And they began to be merry.

What a beautiful picture we have here this morning of the relationship now that is taking place between a father and a wayward son who has come back to God. Here we see the foundation of repentance which no man shall see the Lord without it. It doesn't matter who you are.

There is a foundation of repentance that must be laid. And here we see it so clearly laid in the hard attitude of this son. We also see the element of faith because he rose up and said, I will go back to my Father's house.

My Father will receive me. He had that attitude of faith in his heart. And we also see his desire to obey.

He's not going back to the Father that he can get a ticket to heaven. But his heart's attitude is, Oh, just to be a servant with my Father, that's all I want to do. But look at the Father's response.

Love. Compassion. Forgiveness.

Blessings. Acceptance. Provision.

And on and on we could go over the picture of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith. Here comes this prodigal having wasted everything, having departed from his Father's will completely and in its entirety, having gone his own way and gone way further than he ever dreamed he would go. But yet, when he comes with that heart, that lowly heart that says, I am done with my own ways.

I will return to my Father's house. There, the Father accepts him, puts a robe around him, falls on his neck and kisses him, and receives him into His home, not as a slave, but as a son. Highly honored.

This is a picture of justification, brothers and sisters. This is exactly what God does with each and every one of us. This is something that we shall never get away from.

The heart attitude of the Father, though the failure of the Son was there, they received Him with love, with compassion, with forgiveness, with blessings, with acceptance and provision. Yes, in a sense, the Father looked at the Son and said, Just as if I never sinned. Stamped it across His life.

You have come back to Me. You come back in repentance. You see who I am.

You come with a willing heart that says anything, Lord, anything. Righteous. Righteous.

Justification by faith is so clearly seen in these verses. Now let me ask you this question. What kind of a servant will this be? Praise God for the lowly attitude that He came with.

But look at how much more of a servant He will be as you realize. Yes, He's got a humble heart that says I'm not worthy to do anything for my Father. But, oh God, would You let me do anything? And the Father puts a robe on Him and brings a fatted calf and gives Him shoes to wear and puts a ring on His finger and has a holy celebration for His Son has come home.

What kind of a servant do you think that Son will be in His Father's house in the days ahead? Praise God for the lowly attitude of an unworthy servant. But when the lowly servant becomes an accepted son, you get service like you can never imagine. And that's the heart of God for each and every one of us.

Service like that. You move into a realm of obedience which is untouched before. Into a realm of obedience which glorifies God.

In a realm of obedience that transforms the servant into a loving son. This is what justification does to each and every one of us. Oh, it's true.

May we never get away from the lowly attitude of the servant who said, I will arise and go to my Father and maybe He'll let me be one of His hired servants. May we never get away from that hard attitude, but at the same time realize that the Father runs to meet us when we come to Him, puts out His arms, wraps them around us and accepts us, gives us a new robe and puts it on our back, puts a ring on our finger and shoes on our feet and accepts us into the family and gives us a place to sit among His sons. Hallelujah! That's what God does for each and every one of us.

This is biblical obedience, brothers and sisters. This is the wellspring of biblical obedience right there. Anything short of that is lacking.

I'm sure you can see that. Something is missing in any other kind of obedience than that. Let's drop down again on the human level for just a moment.

There is a difference, isn't there? There is a difference when there is that flow of love and acceptance in any of our human relationships. We know. Yes, we know.

Our son is our son and he must obey us. We know. Our daughter is our daughter and she must obey us.

We know. Our wife is our wife and she must obey us. We know.

I'm the boss and you're the worker and you must obey me. We know those things. Oh, what a powerful flow of obedience comes when there's more than just a servant relationship there, but the relationship of love and blessing and acceptance and all of those things.

You will get far greater obedience if there is a drawing together of the hearts than you will if it's simply I'm the father and you're the son. I'm the mother and you're the daughter. You do what you are told.

You move into a realm of obedience which is untouched before when you bring that element of relationship into. Let's turn now and just look a little bit in Revelation 2 and see the heart of God again. Revelation 2. If I could just give you a real short history before we read the two verses that I want to look at

here.

We see this whole relationship lived out in the life of a group of believers in the city of Ephesus. This was a wicked place. This was a vile place.

This was a place of idolatry. This was a place of much witchcraft and evil. This was a place where God sent the Son of His love, the message of the Son of His love, into that city by the mouth of the Apostle Paul.

And many believed in the Lord. And they, in their humility and the blessed acceptance of God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, they cast themselves unreservedly upon God and they became a vibrant church filled with the love of God. Obedience was there.

It flowed there. It had its proper foundation. It wasn't out of religious obligation, but it was out of the love that flowed in their hearts.

We love Him because He first loved us. But something has happened in Ephesus. It's 30 or 40 years later.

There are many good things there. They labor. They are patient.

They don't like evil. They have borne many things. They have been patient.

They have labored. They serve God. They have not fainted in their heart.

There are many beautiful things there that we acknowledge are good and right. But, nevertheless, God says, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love. Now, there are many ways that we could look at this portion of Scripture, but this morning, for the sake of this little meditation, let's look at it again.

And what God is saying to them is, I'm glad for all the things you're doing, but you left your first love. And therefore, the things you're doing are not pleasing in My sight in the way that they could be. I'm glad you're standing for the right.

I'm glad you don't like evil. I'm glad for your patience. I'm glad for your labor.

But the foundation of your obedience is missing is what God is saying here in these verses. You have left your first love. Go to the prodigal again for a moment and then we'll read another verse here, but let's go to the prodigal for just a moment and put yourself in his shoes there that day.

And imagine how he must have felt as he walked up that dusty road toward his father's house. In all the imaginations of his mind, he probably thought, will he even accept me? Will he receive me? Will he turn me away? Will he point his finger back down this dusty road and send me on my way? What will he do when I go? And he comes there with that lowly attitude and is overwhelmed at his father's love as he sees his father running down the road to meet him and wraps his arms around him and gives him a hug and kisses his neck and receives him into his home. And all those beautiful things that happened, imagine how he must have felt as he sat here in that beautiful celebration that evening when everybody was singing and dancing and they were all feasting together and rejoicing and having a good time.

Imagine how he must have felt. Wow! Why did I wait so long? Why did I wait so long? All of this! Imagine how he must have felt. Oh, I will serve my Father.

I will serve my Father. I will never complain again. I will never think an ungrateful thought again.

I will never think a rebellious thought again. Imagine how he rose up the next day after that beautiful celebration, the first day in his father's house. He got up the next morning ready to go, ready to serve, ready to do anything that his father wanted him to do.

Oh, what a fresh obedience! What a new, a lively, fresh obedience! What a beautiful motivation! All he wants to do is please his father. That's the way it was with Ephesus. But now, it's 30 or 40 years later and that freshness, that sweetness, that pure motivation has waned.

And God says, nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee. You have lost the foundation of your obedience. You have left your first love.

And God goes on to say to them, Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. Now, what God is saying to the church at Ephesus is He's taking them right back to those early days. He's taking them back there where the prodigal came home to the father.

He's taking them back there to the celebration. He's taking them back there to those first few days. He's taking them back to the sweetness of the fellowship and the sweetness and the loveliness of their obedience.

He's taking them back there and saying, I'm glad for all the things you're doing, but you've lost the foundation of your obedience. You're doing what you're doing for wrong reasons. You're being motivated by other things.

Remember. Remember. And do what you did before is what God said to the church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation.

Turn to Psalm 32. Psalm 32 is a psalm of justification. I think we said it some time ago.

I believe Psalm 32 was written after Psalm 51. It's a psalm of justification. The first two verses in Psalm 32 are quoted in Romans 4 as Paul is addressing the issue of being justified by faith and addressing the issue of the blessedness that comes upon those under whom righteousness is imputed.

Not based on your own works, but based on the grace of Christ, righteousness is imputed. We're not going to read all of this psalm, but you can see it there. There's gratefulness in the heart of the psalmist over transgressions that are forgiven.

There's gratefulness over the fact that sin was not imputed to him. He also expresses the fact that he acknowledged his sins. The foundations are there for the right things.

But I want us to notice from verse 7 and following in this psalm, the psalmist goes on to say, now that the relationship has been restored and heaven is open again, the psalmist goes on to say, thou art my hiding place. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Well, that sounds just like the party there at the prodigal's house, doesn't it? Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Shelah. Now listen to the heart of God in this next verse.

God says, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye. Now that the relationship has been made right, now that the forgiveness has taken place, now that the cleansing is fully clear and the relationship has been restored and songs of deliverance are being sung, and you are accepted in the Father's house.

Hear the heart of the Father. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.

Be ye not as a horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

It seems to me as I look at this psalm that the heart of God comes out in this psalm and God admonishes every one of us even this morning and says, Have you been received into my house? Have I put a robe upon you? Have I given you a new ring to wear on your hand and new shoes to put on your feet? Have I slain the fatted calf? Did you hear me rejoicing over you with singing? Ah, my son, my daughter, I will now instruct thee. I will guide thee. I will show you how to walk and live.

I will do it with my eye. You do not have to be like the horse or the mule. Don't be like the horse or the mule.

If heaven is clear over your life, I will guide you with my eye. I won't have to yank the reins to get you to go this way or that way. I will guide you with my eye.

All you have to do is keep these eyes of your heart clear and look at my eye, and I will guide you. This is the level of obedience that God is after for every one of us. And it has been well said that a father or a mother, they know that they have done rightly in training their children when they can guide their children with their eye.

Not even a word needs to be said, for the child knows the heart of the father very well. Not a word of correction needs to be given, because the child knows the heart of the father very well. And the child has its eye on the eye of its father.

And when the child sees the father's eye, it reads the heart of the father and does what father wants. This is the way God would have it be with each and every one of us. I believe this is the way it was with the prodigal.

As he rose up the next day and went out to meet his father in his father's house, he had his eye on the eye of his father. And he was willing to do anything that his father wanted. And with that kind of a willing heart, he simply watched the eye of the father just like the Scripture says, as the eye looks under the hand of the Master, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.

I think of the dear lady there in the New Testament who came to Jesus in the house of the Pharisee and there, weeping, took an alabaster box of ointment and poured it on Jesus' feet and washed His feet and wiped His feet with her hair and anointed His feet with ointment and kissed His feet. The Pharisee looked on and didn't understand what was going on. He kind of looked with disdain.

He even judged the Lord Jesus must not be a righteous man or He wouldn't allow these kind of things to happen. Jesus simply said to him, to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Let's go back to the story of the prodigal in closing this morning.

The story stops. The account in the Scripture stops. But if you will allow me in just a few minutes here to finish the story.

I'm assuming that the second son, the son of religious obedience, he still was there with his father. He still went to bed that night. He got up the next morning.

His heart was ready to serve. He was willing to do what he was always doing. And the forgiven son also got up the next morning with his heart, with his sweet heart, with his humble heart, with his unworthy heart, with his forgiven heart, with his life that has now been blessed by his father.

And both of them got up and began to serve there on the family farm. The wayward son outstripped the other son. His obedience was so sweet, so pure, so without guile, so free from other motives.

He served his father way beyond what the other son did. The other son looked on all his religious obedience and looked on with an eye of envy and evil at this wayward son who came home in humility to receive a blessing from his father. He looked on and criticized.

He looked on and found fault. He watched that son's every step to see if he could catch him at anything that he might do wrong. He could go to his father and accuse him in front of his father.

I do believe if those two continued to live together, that is exactly the way it went in the days ahead. May God deliver us from all other levels of obedience than this beautiful one that we see in the wayward son who has come home. Somehow, only by God's grace, but somehow, we, each and every one of us, must never lose the wonder of God's grace to me.

We must never lose it. We must be alert when our eye begins to look wrongly at a wayward one whom God brings back. We must watch with danger signs when we see our heart looking unfavorably at the wayward one who comes back home.

So, I'm telling you, history would bear it out. The wayward son, the forgiven son, will outstrip the other one. He will outrun.

He will out-serve. He will out-worship that other one because he saw his need and in humility, he came to the Father in his undone-ness and he was forgiven for all his sins. You say, well, Brother Denny, what's the hope of the second son? What hope for him this morning? Well, let me give you just a little hope for the second son.

The second son needs to see the same thing that the first son saw. That his pride, his religious arrogance, he's in just as much of a pig-pen as his brother was in. I think of the story of the two, the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the house of God to pray.

Which one went home justified and which one went home not justified? There's hope for that second son if he will only see that the ground is level at the cross. We all come the same way whether we repent of religious pride or whether we repent of worldliness out there in the world. We still have to repent to come to God.

Each and every one of you. Biblical obedience this morning. May the Lord help us to glean from that things for our own lives today.

Amen. I thank God for that word to my own heart. First of all, and to us here this morning, I just thought as we're sitting here and I'm listening to the word of God come to my own heart.

Is my heart right with God? The obedience coming out of my life to my Heavenly Father. Is it a have to at times or is it a delight to do my Father's will? Are we any different than the church at Ephesus? Can we slack in our love? But yet, like that elder son, we're very careful to keep the letter of the law. And I had to think also of the obedience of those that are working for a boss, for a Lord, for a Master.

How is our obedience? I had to think of in our homes. Have I allowed self in there? Have I given room to resentment? And maybe just a tinge of rebellion begin to sprout up. I do not want to obey.

Then we write that psalm there of the blessing of the person whose transgression is forgiven. And how that when we acknowledge our sin and our iniquities before the Lord and confess unto the Lord my transgression, then Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. You know, I don't want to pass up that opportunity this morning.

Maybe we just need to have a good old fashioned honesty before the Lord. I confess my need in this area. Lord, I have sinned.

Wrong attitudes, serving out of have-to, rather than a cheerful obedience. I just confess my need in this area. Just the loss of that love that just loves to do God's will.

I just want to open it up this morning for anyone to share. Maybe a confession right here. Or something to add to the message that will be edifying to all of us here.

Is there anyone? Raise your hand. We can share together. Brothers or sisters.

Okay, in the back there. Craig? I just want to thank the elders here at Charity and the people here at Charity that has taught me that I was lost. And I was saved this January.

And it's been a blessed time since then. Praise God. On top of that, I got to go to the leadership seminar.

And that was just, I just soaked it up like a sponge. It was just, I was so privileged to be able to go there. And I thank everyone here for all your help and your prayers.

Amen. God bless you, Craig. Thanks for sharing.

Amen, and I'm thankful for that message too. God had been dealing with my heart for quite a long time. And I'm just thankful that, you know, I feel clear with God.

I am thankful that God is working on me in this area of obedience and authority. I have a long ways to go. I was in a pit for a long time in this area.

And I'm just desirous that God would continually, you know, break me in this area, you know, and keep me in check. It is my desire, you know, to be under authority, to learn what that means and how that's worked out. You know, one thing that God has been teaching me is this area of, you know, the tongue and watching what I say, you know, especially when it comes to, you know, the church and leadership and

authority.

And I haven't been perfect in that. And I repent that it is my heart, my desire just to be very careful and covet, you know, what God is doing and just learn to come under and be sensitive to the hand of God in these areas. And, you know, I know that God covets after His church.

And I know that God loves His bride. And God works, you know, in His body. And I just want to be a part of that and are working in my life.

And I might be a useful tool in the hands of the Master. And I might learn what it means to be a slave to Christ. You know, the Lordship of Christ, I've been looking into that a little bit.

And I just want to really come under that Lordship of Christ and His church and all. And so I would covet your prayers in this area. Amen.

Amen. And as an accepted son. Hallelujah.

Hand up here on the sister's side. Front, centre. I'm just so thankful.

My heart is just welling up with joy at seeing how the Lord has hidden the truth in this parable. The Resurrection, how we're dead to ourselves. We come to that place of humility and brokenness, and then God raises us up, and we can serve Him with overwhelming gratitude and joy, and it comes, it's hidden there in this passage that I hadn't seen it in, and I just, my heart overflowed with joy to see that God hides His truth throughout Scripture in so many ways, and it's truth.

We can be free to serve the Lord with overflowing joy and the resurrected life. This is the gospel. But there is, it's not a have to, but a get to.

Amen. Thank you, sister, for sharing that hand right here. Also, amen.

I think on one way this message was very convicting to me, because I know I have a tendency in my own heart to feel like sometimes things are have to instead of get to, but on the joy side of it, the last few months God has been speaking to me about this in the area of serving in my own home and to the people that I'm surrounded with all day long, and it has been such an exciting discovery to me, and I found that it's been addicting, and I look for ways to serve the people around me because it's been so exciting, and just looking at taking that attitude of a servant, of I don't deserve any thanks, and then when someone thanks me, because they all often do, it just makes it so much more exciting instead of doing something and then no one says anything and you're disappointed. And so I just give that as a testimony of us as young people at home, how exciting it can be to just serve our families and pour our lives out for them there until God gives us something more to do. Amen.

Thank you for that testimony.

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