

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

The idea of a positive active choice or decision (a response of obedience) is clearly involved in salvation in contrast to unbelief's passive or negative response. To go to hell all you have to do is NOTHING!

Hebrews 2:3 (NKJV)

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

In Deuteronomy 30:19 God called heaven and earth as a witness to the choice that He was setting before Israel regarding "*life and death, blessing and cursing*" and therefore urges them to "*choose life*". Clearly a CHOICE was set before them involving the will.

Joshua challenged the people saying, "*choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*" (Josh. 24:15). In 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah said to the people, "*How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.*" Clearly a volitional choice was being presented to the people. Through His prophets God consistently called Israel to turn from their evil ways with this conclusion: "*Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.*" (2 Kings 17:13-14).

In reviewing Israel's history Psalm 78:8 describes the previous generation as "*A stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright*" and then as the writer goes on to describe their wayward ways he says, "*their heart was not steadfast with Him*" (Ps. 78:37).

Thus, the people were held accountable for their choices. In Isaiah 30:15, we see God's invitation to rest and salvation, but the response of Israel was "*you would not*". In Isaiah 55 the invitation to "*Come*" has gone out with the exhortation to, "*Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way...return to the LORD...*" (Isa. 55:1-7). In Isaiah 65:15 the LORD spells out the reason for judgment saying: "*Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight.*" Again, the issue was that of CHOICE!

NOTE: THE WORDS SEEK, TURN, OBEY, COME, ETC. INVOLVE AN ACTIVE CHOICE OF THE WILL. RESPONSE IS BOTH VOLITIONAL & ACTIVE.

Christ, throughout His ministry, presented Himself to the nation and, towards the end of it, said of Jerusalem, *“How often I wanted to gather your children... but you were not willing!”* (Matt. 23:37). The problem was that they were UNWILLING! Everyone who comes to Christ hears His sayings and does them is likened unto a man who builds his house on a rock foundation (Lk. 6:46-49). Jesus illustrated the non-response of Israel, saying, *“We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep.”* (Lk 7:32). In Luke 11:28 Jesus said, *“blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”* In John 5:40 Jesus said to the Jews, *“But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”* Clearly the onus was on them in their not being willing. In John 7:17 Jesus said, *“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know...”*.

In the gospel of John, the word BELIEVE is always a verb indicating the active nature of a saving faith. John 3:36 says, *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does **not obey** the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* (Jn. 3:36). In John 6:37 Jesus said, *“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me...”*. And in John 10:27 Jesus said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”*

In Acts 5:32 Peter and the apostles said that the Holy Spirit is given, *“to those who obey Him”* [God]. In Acts 7 Stephen in recounting Israel’s history of rebellion said, *“our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt”*. In Acts 17:27 Paul explained that people *“should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him”*. Towards the end of Acts, we see that *“some were persuaded...and some disbelieved.”* (Acts 28:24).

The **“bookends”** of Romans present the necessity of the obedience of faith. In Romans 1:5 Paul said, *“we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name”*, and then towards the end of the book he explains that his gospel has been made known *“for obedience to the faith”* (Rom. 16:25-26). Paul in describing the conversion of the Christians in Rome said, *“you obeyed from the heart”* (Rom. 6:17). In contrast God said to His people Israel, *“All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”* (Rom. 10:21). In Romans 10:10 Paul says, *“with the heart one believes unto righteousness”*. In Romans 15:18 Paul describes the response of saving faith on behalf of the Gentiles as that of being “obedient”.

In 2 Corinthians 3:16 Paul explains that when *“one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”* In Philippians 3 Paul recounts his testimony saying that he counted *“all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may gain Christ”* (Phil. 3:7-9). In 2 Timothy 4:3-4,

Paul warns that the time would come when people “*will not endure sound doctrine*” and “*will turn their ears away from the truth*”.

Last Day’s judgment comes upon the world because the people “*did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (2 Thess. 2:10). The writer of Hebrews warns: “*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (Heb. 10:26). In the Hall of Faith chapter of Hebrews 11 we read that by faith Moses “*refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God*” (Heb. 11:24-25). Jude 3-4 exhorts us to earnestly contend for the faith because ungodly men creep in “*who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

We are not saved by the obedience of works but we are saved by the obedience of faith!

2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 (NKJV)

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Acts 16:31 (NKJV)

31 So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”