

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH “VERSUS” ZAP THEOLOGY

There are all kinds of errant and subjective ideas about the topic of “faith”. However, a truly biblical faith is always rooted in the truth of Scripture. A biblical faith must have an object and that object must be the God of the Bible (Heb. 11:6). A biblical faith is always connected to the Word of God as true faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). It’s not about personal subjective feelings or a personal agenda. Rather, the basis of true faith is God and His Word.

As progressive revelation developed, the OBJECT of faith that God came to demand is found in the PERSON of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the resurrection of Christ, God “now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30-31).

Not only is the OBJECT of faith (the Lord Jesus Christ) all-important, but so is the NATURE of saving faith. One must have the RIGHT KIND of faith. A true saving faith is a matter of the heart (cf. Lk. 8:15; Rom. 10:9-10). God DEMANDS a saving faith response to the truth of His Son (cf. 1 Jn. 5:9-13).

God is sovereign in salvation. “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” (Rom. 11:36). Left to ourselves there is “none who seeks after God” (Rom. 3:11). Left to our own devices we all go astray and never turn around (Isa. 53:6).

Only a GRACE intervention can change the rebel course of depravity. Yet this reality does not cancel out the fact of human responsibility or the necessity of human response. We see this reality early in the Scriptures in relation to Cain, and then the rest of the Bible builds upon this premise. God intervened in Cain’s life by speaking TRUTH to him. God warned him and put the responsibility of personal CHOICE before him for which he was then accountable.

Genesis 4:7 (NKJV)

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

Some people have what I call a “ZAP THEOLOGY”. They believe that somehow God just zaps people with faith. The elect are the “zapped” and the non-elect are the “non-zapped”. With this type of theology, one can end up baptizing babies because personal response has nothing to do with faith. It’s just a matter of God zapping the elect. No “knowledge of the truth” is required (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 10:26). I don’t see “zap theology” as being consistent with Scripture.

While acknowledging “mystery” tensions here (cf. Jn. 3:8; Rom. 11:33), I see the Bible teaching the necessity of an obedient response called *THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH*. I see it in the warning of Jesus saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Mt. 13:9; Lk. 8:8; etc.)

Those holding to “Zap Theology” basically see the elect as just robots or puppets preordained according to the sovereign prerogative of God.

I think most holding to this would deny this classification, but in actuality, when one totally removes all human response and human responsibility from the equation, you end up with just a straitjacket form of determinism.

Now God is God, and if He works this way or wants to work this way, I bow before Him. He has no argument from me because He is God! However, when I study the Scriptures, I don’t see God revealing Himself in this way. I see Him inviting, appealing, urging, reasoning, and holding people accountable for the choices they make in relation to the light given. Zap Theology has a major problem with texts like Luke 7:30.

Luke 7:30 (NKJV)

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

How can it be that God just arbitrarily determines whom He wants to be saved, and yet it says here in Luke 7:30 that the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves? God’s will was for them to respond positively to the message of repentance, but they refused. The onus is on them for rejecting the will of God, not on God for not wanting them to be saved.

Romans is the most systematic presentation of the gospel that we have in the New Testament. Romans has two great “faith bookends”, both which emphasize the obedience of faith. In Romans 1:5 we see Paul was given grace and apostleship “**for obedience of the faith among all nations**”, and at the end of the book in Romans 16:25-26 Paul says that his gospel is now made known “**for obedience to the faith**” (cf. Rm. 15:18).

This is the whole point: The gospel Paul preached demanded a response of obedience. The GOSPEL is a message about CHRIST that demands an obedient response of FAITH regarding the PERSON of Christ!

In Acts 5:32 Peter explains that God gives the Holy Spirit “to those who OBEY Him.” John 3:36 says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not OBEY the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (ESV) The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus, “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who OBEY Him” (Heb. 5:9 – NKJV).

John 3:18 says “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Personal accountability, and thus condemnation, is FOR NOT BELIEVING!

Paul in 2 Thess. 1:8, speaking in reference to the Second Coming, says Jesus will be revealed “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.” (Emphasis in caps is mine) Accountability is fundamentally about OBEYING the gospel. FAITH in keeping with GRACE is non-meritorious but does in fact involve an obedient response to the truth of WHO Jesus is as LORD and SAVIOR (cf. Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8-9).

Accountability and judgment make no sense apart from the reality of personal responsibility!