

## Sayings of Jesus 2 – Not Everyone Shall Enter

**Reading: Matthew 7:21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction:**

This lesson is a continuation of the series of lessons that are looking at various “sayings” of Jesus in order to determine what they mean for us as Christians in practical terms. This week’s lesson comes from **Matthew 7:21-23**.

Many years ago I was watching a TV talent show that had well-known media personalities as the judges. One of the acts featured a small group of men and women who sang one or more (religious) gospel songs. When it came time for the judges to make their comments on the performance, one of the judges said something along the line, *“That’s how I like my religion – just listening to gospel songs, rather than sermons and all that churchy stuff.”*

Now there is certainly nothing wrong with singing. In fact, Christians are commanded to sing to one another and to use the songs as a means of teaching (**Colossians 3:16**). But being a disciple of Christ involves more than just singing or just listening to singing. As we saw in the first lesson in this series, discipleship involves a cost, even self-sacrifice. And in the verses from which this lesson is drawn, Jesus points out that discipleship requires something else – obedience.

In this lesson, we will examine the need for obedience in the life of a Christian.

## **LESSON**

### **1) Obedience and Legalism**

I would first like to address the issue where obedience is sometimes equated with legalism.

#### a) The need for grace

Sometimes, when we teach the need for obedience to God, there are those who say that we are being “legalistic”. Now it is true that those who are legalistic also emphasize obedience. But not all teaching regarding the need for obedience is associated with legalism. As we will see later, Jesus called on His followers to be obedient, but nobody accused Him of being a “legalist”.

The problem with legalism is that it tends to leave God’s grace out of the picture, and focusses more on requiring people to be fully obedient to laws as the means of salvation. However, we know from scripture that while it is technically possible to be 100% obedient to God’s laws, *e.g.* Jesus (**Hebrews 4:15**), the reality is that we will fail to do so (**Romans 3:23; James 2:10**). Even the most godly people found in the scriptures were not perfect;

- the great patriarch Abraham twice used deception to give others the impression that Sarah was simply his sister, not his wife<sup>2</sup> (**Genesis 12:10-13; Genesis 20:1-13**)

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<sup>1</sup> All Biblical quotes are from the New King James Version Bible.

<sup>2</sup> It appears that Sarah was his half-sister, not full sister – **Genesis 20:12**.

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- David, a man after God’s own heart, was guilty of adultery and arranged murder (**Acts 13:22; 2 Samuel 11:1-25**).
- the apostle Paul acknowledged that he was a sinner (**Romans 7:19-24; 1 Timothy 1:15**).

The Old Testament Law itself was not a remedy for sin, even with its animal sacrifices (**Hebrews 10:4**). What it did do was to highlight sin whenever it occurred (**Romans 7:7**) – but it could not remove it (**Hebrews 10:1**).

Therefore, God’s grace is absolutely essential to our salvation (**Ephesians 2:5-9; Galatians 2:16, 21**). Without it, we would still be lost in sin.

However, God’s grace does not remove the need for obedience on our part.  
- more on that shortly.

### b) Jesus is our example of one being obedient to the Father

Jesus came to carry out the Father’s will (**Luke 22:42**). He did not come to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him (**John 5:30**). His life was always about doing those things that pleased the Father (**John 8:29b**).

- He spoke the things that His Father told Him to speak (**John 12:49**).
- He did the works that His Father wanted Him to work (**John 4:34; 5:36**) – He was about doing the Father’s business, even from a very young age (**Luke 2:49**).

Obedying the Father did not mean that it was always easy for Jesus. He experienced the true meaning (or test) of obedience in that He accepted and endured suffering in order to complete the Father’s will (**Hebrews 5:8**). Obedying someone when it involves no real sacrifice or hardship is easy. But when obedience requires you to do something that you would prefer not to do, or something that is going to cause considerable discomfort or pain in the process, then that is when your obedience is really tested. Jesus passed that test – He was obedient even to the point of death (**Philippians 2:8**).

Obedience to the Father was a fundamental characteristic of Jesus’ life, but did that make Jesus a legalist? Of course not! He was obedient because He loved the Father (**John 14:31**), and He knew what His obedience would achieve – the church (**Ephesians 5:25; Hebrews 12:2**).

## 2) We are to be obedient to His will

### a) Just as Jesus was obedient to the Father, so must we

We saw above that Jesus was obedient to the Father in every way. Jesus now calls on us to be obedient to Him. When He commissioned the apostles to go out into the world and preach the gospel, one of the things that He told them to teach was this;

“... teaching them to *observe* all things that I have commanded you, ...” **Matthew 28:20** (emphasis mine, SK)

The word “*observe*” here doesn’t mean “*to just look at it*” in the way we may observe some event happening before our eyes. It means “*to put into practice*”, “*to fulfil*” (a command), *i.e.* “*to obey*”<sup>3</sup>. In other words, Jesus was

<sup>3</sup> Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek word 5083.

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saying that the apostles were to teach people that they need to obey the commands of the Lord (given through the apostles - **John 14:26**). This same message and exhortation is found in **James 1:22 f.f.**;

*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves ...”*

In other words, it is not sufficient just to know what God’s Word says. We are to do what it says, otherwise, we are just kidding ourselves.

Without obedience, we cannot be saved. Consider these verses;

- Jesus is  
*“...the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him.**”*  
(**Hebrews 5:9** – emphasis mine, SK).
- when Jesus returns, He will be taking vengeance on those who  
*“.... do not know God, and on those who **do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”* (**2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8** – emphasis mine, SK).
- there will be indignation and wrath on those who  
*“... do not obey the truth<sup>4</sup>, but obey unrighteousness ....”*  
(**Romans 2:8**).

Like Jesus, we are to live lives that are fully pleasing to the Father (**Colossians 1:10**). We cannot be pleasing to the Father if we are not obedient to Him (**Ephesians 5:6**).

### b) We are to be obedient to the “narrow way”

The context of Jesus statement in **Matthew 7:21** is about following the “narrow way”, and being wary of false teachers. The term, “narrow way”, suggests that there is a clearly defined path to be followed amongst all the surrounding religious teachings. This path is the Word of God as revealed by the apostles and other New Testament writers under guidance of the Holy Spirit (**John 16:13**; **2 Timothy 3:16**; **2 Peter 1:20-21**). It is the “... *pattern of sound words* ...” which we obeyed in order to become Christians in the first place (**Romans 6:17**), and to which we must hold fast for the rest of our lives (**2 Timothy 1:13**).

The warning about false teachers also indicates that not everyone proclaiming to be teaching the word of God is actually doing so. By coming in “*sheep’s clothing*”, they appear innocent (**2 Corinthians 11:14-15**), but in reality, they are “*ravenous wolves*”, who deceive the hearts of their hearers (**Acts 20:29-30**; **Romans 16:18**).

The lesson from Jesus is quite clear. What we do must be what He wants us to do, not what we want to do. In matters of faith and doctrine, He is the one with all the authority (**Matthew 28:18**). He is the Head of the church (**Ephesians 1:22**). We are to serve and obey Him (**Romans 6:17-18**; **Ephesians 5:15-17**). It does not matter how good and noble our own ideas and deeds may seem to us (**Proverbs 16:25**; **Jeremiah 10:23**), if we are not obeying His Will, His Word, then He will reject us (**Matthew 7:23**).

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<sup>4</sup> God’s Word is truth – **John 17:17b**

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### 3) There is a link between love and obedience

Finally, there is a link between love and obedience.

Some may suggest that the most important thing for us to do is to love God, rather than worrying about obedience. Yes, loving God is very important (**1 John 4:7-16**). Jesus Himself said that loving God was the first and foremost commandment (**Mark 12:28-30**). And for the Christian, it should be a natural response to what He has done for us (**1 John 4:19**). But the scriptures also show a direct link between love and obedience. For example, consider the following passages;

*“If you love Me, keep my commandments.”* **John 14:15**

*“He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me ....”* **John 14:21a**

*“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”* **John 15:10**

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”* **1 John 5:3**

What we see from these verses is that love and obedience cannot be separated. If we really do love God, then we will strive to be obedient to Him. For just as our works perfect our faith (**James 2:14-26**), so too our obedience perfects and demonstrates our love for God.

### Conclusion:

Many in society like and want the idea of a “feel good” religion, *i.e.* they want all the promises and blessings that God has to offer, but they want a faith and practice that suits them first, putting God second. Simply claiming that “*Jesus is my Lord*” is not enough. It needs to be seen in our actions. Jesus said in **Luke 6:46**;

*“Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and not do the things I say?”*

Let us all serve God, not simply in word, but also in deed, following His will, not our own. For to such are those whom the Lord will say on that day;

*“.... Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ....”*  
(**Matthew 25:34b**).