

1. Trusting in the Lord Means to Simply Obey

- a. Simple Obedience is the unquestioning obedience of the trusting child
- b. "Do all things without grumbling and disputing"
 - i. Command linked to the prayer in 1:10-11
- c. Grumbling – complaining, whispering
 - i. Recalls the Exodus (15:24; 16:6-8; Deut 32), evidenced by Paul's allusion to Deut 32
 - ii. This grumbling is against God, not each other
 1. All complaining against others finds its root in a complaint against God
 2. All anxiety finds its root, not in the faithless person who has broken our trust, but in our unbelief that God is good and in control and for us (forgot the cross)
- d. Disputing – reasoning, deliberating, disputing, from where we get the word "dialogue"
 - i. This is the inner thinking that results in complaining
 1. When God says, "I want you to do this" we respond with silence because we're thinking..."Does He mean today...or tomorrow? Did He really mean that tree? No bites at all? Why?"
 2. "You know, God, sourdough would have been better than this manna"
 - ii. This word is never used in a positive sense in Scripture
 1. We, as humans, dialogue as a means to mutual growth in wisdom and knowledge
 2. But God doesn't grow in wisdom, so there is no need for Him to dialogue with us...He merely wants us to listen, trust Him, and obey Him because He knows what is best
- e. We are called to simple obedience
 - i. Our grumbling and questioning of God is due to unbelief
 1. Hebrews 3:12-19 – the Israelites were not able to enter rest because of unbelief, which is equated with "disobedience" in vv18-19
 2. We don't obey until we understand God's reasons and the costs involved
 - a. This is just a form of unbelief, isn't it?
 - b. We want to see it first before we'll trust Him enough to move forward
 - ii. We self-justify our lack of faith because we ultimately think we know a better way to holiness and happiness than God does for us
 1. In fact, at the root of all disobedience is the false belief that either:
 - a. God isn't out for my good
 - i. He's holding things back from me (Gen 3:5)
 - ii. He couldn't love a wretch like me
 - b. God doesn't know what's best for me
 - i. Rather, I know what's best for me
 - ii. These are both examples of arrogance, the self-rule that enslaves our hearts

“Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am in that moment doubtful as to God’s true intentions in giving me that command. Does He really have my interests at heart? Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having? Such questions, whether consciously asked or not, lie underneath every act of disobedience.

However, the gospel changes my view of God’s commandments, in that it helps me to see the heart of the Person from whom those commandments come. When I begin my train of thought with the gospel, I realize that if God love me enough to sacrifice His Son’s life for me, then He must be guided by that same love when He speaks His commands to me. Viewing God’s commands and prohibitions in this light, I can see them for what they really are: friendly signposts from a heavenly Father who is seeking to love me through each directive, so that I might experience His very fullness forever.

When controlling my thoughts as described above, the gospel cures me of my suspicion of God, thereby disposing me to walk more trustingly on the path of obedience to His commands.” -Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer*

- iii. Because God is wiser than us, and better than us, and the cross reveals the depth of His love for us, we can trust Him and obey even when we don’t understand His reasons
 1. Romans 8:32 – “He who did not spare His own Son...give us all things?”
 2. If He has said it, trust Him and follow His instructions, because the gospel shows us that He is for us in order to lead us to Him to find our joy in His presence.
 3. So, we see that this command is not a legalistic way to earn God’s favor, but rather the instructive command to walk in trust in the Lord completely because He is working in us by grace
 4. This simple trusting obedience is the way to joy, rest, and peace

2. Simple Obedience Leads to Practical Holiness

- a. Deep faith in God’s goodness and wisdom (as strengthened and empowered by the gospel) is evidence that we are His children
 - i. Children of God are like their Father
 - ii. Blameless and Innocent –
 1. Innocent
 - a. Inner purity of heart
 - b. Unmixed with the affections of the world, which strives after money, sex, power
 2. Blameless
 - a. Outward expression of purity
 - b. Without blame
 - c. Think of Daniel, whose accusers could not find anything in his life by which to call him to account unless it had to do with his worship of the LORD: He was blameless
 - iii. Unblemished – the recollection of the highest offerings given to God in the OT
 1. Worthy of the calling which we have received (Eph 4:1)

2. Bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God so that we are fully pleasing to Him (Col 1:10)
 3. Walking worthily of the One who called us into His own Kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12)
- b. This simple obedience sets us apart from the world
- i. Holiness – set apart, different
 - ii. Children who are blameless, by the grace of God, in simple obedience to the Lord live in the midst of a drastically different world
 1. Crooked and perverse generation
 - a. Deut 32
 - b. Here the rebellious people of Israel are the crooked and perverse generation b/c they turned to idols and did not trust the Lord and obey His commands
 2. Shining stars in the universe
 - a. Dan 12:3
 - b. The light of humble trust in the Lord, the trust that obeys Him wholeheartedly w/o grumbling or questioning, shines forth into the darkness of self-rule and idolatrous religion
 - iii. It is belief in the gospel that sets us apart, even in our motivation for obeying the Lord
 1. What you are determines how you act: the NT imperatives are always linked to the gospel indicatives
 2. Matt 5:14-16 – You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men in such a way that they see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven

“You will cleanse no sin from your life that you have not first recognized as being pardoned through the cross. This is because holiness starts in the heart. The essence of holiness is not new behavior, activity, or disciplines. Holiness is new affections, new desires, and new motives that then lead to new behavior. If you don’t see your sin as completely pardoned, then your affections, desires, and motives will be wrong. You will aim to prove yourself. Your focus will be the consequences of your sin rather than hating the sin and desiring God in its place.”

- Tim Chester, *You Can Change*

3. Holding Fast the Word of God is the Foundation of Simple Faith and Simple Obedience
 - a. We must hold this Word fast
 - i. Never moving from it, off it, or around it, but always placing our hearts directly toward it, on it, and seeing all things through it.
 1. We become complainers and grumblers when we have “forgotten” the depths to which God has humbled Himself, out of love, to redeem rebellious sinners like us
 2. When we move away from the truth of the gospel, we tend to become self-righteous or self-pitying toward each other and particularly towards God
 - a. But standing firm upon the gospel of the crucified God-man, risen from the dead to reign over all, moves us to be:

- i. humbled by the fact that it is my sin that necessitated such relentless work so that we don't grumble and complain when we are wronged
 - ii. Emboldened by the greatness of God's love toward us, that He would do such a thing to redeem us, so we don't fear that He isn't for our good when He calls us to difficult things
 - b. So, the command to hold fast the Word of Life is really the answer to not complaining and grumbling like the Israelites in the wilderness
- ii. The Word of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ is the power to transform us degree by degree as we gaze upon Him (2 Cor 3:18; 4:6)
 - 1. This transformation, this seeing of Jesus, comes primarily through His Word
 - 2. Now, reading the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, is not some magical means of transformation as if by merely pronouncing the words or scanning your eyes across them will magically change you.
 - 3. But God always uses the Word to transform us. It is at the heart of His transformative plan for our lives because it is the heart of His self-disclosure of Himself. If you want to know God, then you must find Him in His Word.
- b. The gospel is the heart and foundation of all life, i.e. "the Word of Life"
 - i. To truly live, not merely breathe, but to truly live life that can be described as "eternal" in its quality is life that is grounded upon the gospel, the Word of life.
 - ii. We need to gaze into the glory and power of God in the gospel every day so that our affections and desires are transformed into obedience to the fullness of the enjoyment of God. Let His Word reveal the glories of Jesus to you, from the OT history of God's redemptive plan to the fullness of the times at the arrival and accomplishment of Jesus.

"To use an expression..., we must 'preach the gospel to ourselves every day.' For me that means I keep going back to Scriptures such as Isaiah 53:6, Galatians 2:20, and Romans 8:1. It means I frequently repeat the words from an old hymn, 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'"

-Jerry Bridges, *Gospel-Driven Sanctification*

"Never be content with your current grasp of the gospel. The gospel is life-permeating, world-altering, universe-changing truth. It has more facets than a diamond. Its depths man will never exhaust."

- C.J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*

Conclusion:

Impossible, you say? To live this kind of life of simple obedience, blameless and pure, shining into the darkness is impossible? It feels that way doesn't it? However, don't divorce verse 14 from verse 13. It is God, the God of the impossible things, which is at work in you to work for His good pleasure. That is big medicine for the struggling sinner's heart. God...I mean, GOD, is at work in you. The good work that He began, He will be faithful to complete it in the day of Christ. For us, we are to cling to the Word, for through this wonderful Word of life we are drawn near to God and it is in our nearness to the holy God, in the amazing enormity of His love for us revealed in the gospel of Jesus that we see His glory, and are moved in the deepest affections of heart to live out of simple, trusting obedience for His glory and renown and our joy.