**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Spirit In Which They Obeyed**

The book of Acts gives us an account of some of the apostles going out and fulfilling the great commission to preach the gospel to the whole world. Consequently we have in the book of Acts recorded accounts of people being converted to Christ. We typically talk about these cases of conversion to help people understand what they must do to be saved. On previous programs we have looked at some of these cases of conversion and emphasized what they did to be saved. This morning I want to talk about some of these cases of conversion, but with a different focus. I want to talk about the spirit with which they obeyed. This lesson is intended to challenge us to consider the spirit in which we should obey the Lord.

First, they obeyed immediately. They saw the urgency to obey.

In Acts 2 we read of the apostles preaching the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Many of them became convicted of their sins and wanted to know what to do. Peter told them *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (v. 38) Verse 41 says, *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”* Notice, “THAT DAY” about three thousand souls obeyed. They obeyed immediately. In Acts 8 we read of Philip preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. After the eunuch hears the gospel preached he said, *“...See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”* Verse 38 say, “*So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”* Notice, the eunuch learned what he must do to be saved and he obeyed immediately. In Acts 16 we read of Paul and Silas speaking the word of the Lord to a Philippian jailor and to all in his house. It says in verse 33, *“...And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”* In Acts 22, Paul tells about his conversion to Christ. He tells about Ananias coming to him and saying, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* Paul waits not longer. He is baptized immediately.

All these people recognized the urgency of obeying the gospel, those doing the teaching and those obeying.

Why the urgency? They recognized they were sinners, that they were subject to the wrath of God, and therefore, in need of salvation. Peter impressed this upon the minds of the Jews in Jerusalem when it says, *“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’”* They knew they were sinners (v. 37), and they were told what to do (v. 38) and now Peter tries to impress on their minds the urgency of obeying. There would be an urgency because they could lose their lives just at any moment. There were threats to their lives as there are threats to our lives. We need to see the urgency in obeying the gospel just as they did. We can die at any moment. When we are riding 70 mph down the interstate with another car passing just a few feet away at 80 mph and an 18 wheeler coming in on us from behind traveling at 75 mph, we are just a false move away from death. When we realize that we are sinners, that life is brief, and life could be taken from us at any moment, surely anyone not a Christian ought to see the urgency. Those who obeyed in the first century obeyed immediately after they learned what they must do.

Secondly, they obeyed leaving family, friends and their former religious affiliation. Saul of Tarsus is a good example. Saul was born in Tarsus but brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law. He was taught according to the strictness of their father’s law, and was zealous toward God as a Jew (Acts 22:3). We don’t know much about his parents, but it may be that they saw to it that he was brought to Jerusalem so he could receive this training in the Law under the most eminent teachers. What sacrifices do you think were involved for Saul’s parents to make sure he got this training? Saul was evidently a star pupil. Paul said in Gal. 1:14, *“And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”* Saul was a Pharisee. He was the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6)*.* Can you imagine how devastated his mother and dad would have been when they learned that he had become a Christian? No doubt, they would have been tremendously disappointed with Saul. They could have become Christians, but we don’t know, but if not, they would have been disappointed in him.How would Gamaliel have felt, that one of his star students had become a Christian. But in Saul’s mind, if it meant leaving his father and mother, his friends, his former teacher, his religious affiliation he would do it because it was the right thing to do. He understood Jesus is Lord. Acts 18:8 says, *“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.”* Can you imagine the disappointment that would have swept through that synagogue when they heard that Crispus (not just a member), the ruler of the synagogue had become a Christian.

It is hard to turn your back on your family, friends, and your past religious affiliation to become a Christian. But, no doubt, they were aware of what Jesus had spoken while on earth when He said, “*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”* (Matt. 10:37-38) Those who became Christians in the first century were willing to do whatever it took to be disciples of Jesus, whom they knew was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But they also, no doubt, understood the words that Jesus spoke about what one would have if he left all for Jesus. He said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.”* (Mark 10:29-30) One who leaves all for Jesus will gain much more in this time, and in the age to come. Relationships change when one becomes a Christian. Your relationship with your family who are not Christians is not the same as before. But in the church you are in the midst of fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, and sometimes in houses that are not yours, but in another sense they are yours. And you have eternal life. One who becomes a Christian may give up a lot, but they gain much more. This was the spirit in which they obeyed in the first century.

Thirdly, they obeyed knowing that trials and afflictions were ahead.

Jesus didn’t hide this fact, nor did the apostles. Those who became Christians in the first century knew they would face persecutions. Jesus told the apostles in John 15:20, *“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”* Knowing it was going to happen, they obeyed the Lord anyway.

A good example of this is Timothy. Young people, who are your role models? Some athlete? An entertainer? A good role model for you is Timothy. He was a young man when he obeyed the gospel, probably on Paul’s first missionary journey when he came through Lystra. He may have seen Paul stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). If you had seen a preacher stoned and left for dead, would you still be inclined to heed what the preacher was preaching? Would you want to go out and preach what he preached? Apparently, Timothy was not deterred. When Paul came back through Lystra on his second journey he took Timothy with him. You can be assured that Timothy knew of the perils and dangers that went along with traveling with Paul. But he went anyway. (Let me suggest this is not some mission trip to some exotic island which is some bit mission service and some bit site seeing. They went to preach the gospel in the face of persecution.) There is no indication that Timothy looked back. Paul said concerning Timothy in Philippians 2:22, *“But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.”* Timothy knew of the perils, but he served anyway. What a role model to follow.

This is the spirit in which they obeyed. The day could come when in the USA, Christians are tried and imprisoned for committing what is called “hate crimes,” because we preach against the practice of homosexuality. Are we ready? Are we ready to obey in the spirit in which they obeyed?

Fourthly, they obeyed with joy and thanksgiving. In spite of the persecutions they had joy and thanksgiving in their obedience. Concerning the new disciples in Jerusalem it says, *“they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”* (Acts 2:46). These people were happy people. In Acts 8:39, after the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized it says, *“he went on his way rejoicing.”*  And rightly so. He was saved from his sins! In Acts 16:34 we read concerning the Philippian jailer, *“he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”* In spite of the fact they faced trials and afflictions, they received the gospel with joy. They knew they had found something that was real and was of enormous value. They knew it was more precious than anything this world could offer. They had found the hidden treasure. Jesus said in Matthew 13:44, *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”* They knew they had found this hidden treasure in the gospel, and they joyfully sell everything to obtain it. They don’t sell everything with tears in their eyes, but they do it with joy because they know the value of the treasure. The treasures of the kingdom of God are of more value than anything we could own in this life. Apparently, those who obeyed the gospel in the first century obeyed with joy and thanksgiving.

Fifthly, they obeyed, looking to Jesus Christ for their salvation. Surely they did not believe that because they were being baptized to be saved they were somehow earning their salvation. They did not put their faith in the water, or in a preacher. They knew where their salvation was. It was in Jesus Christ. It was because of what Jesus had done for them. When one turns to the Lord, he is putting his trust in the Lord to save him. When one is baptized he is *“calling on the name of the Lord.”* In Acts 22:16 Ananias said to Saul, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* When Saul was baptized, he was not calling on the waters of baptism to save him. He was not calling on the name of some preacher. He was calling on the name of the Lord. He knew the Lord was the one who would save Him. Those who obeyed in the first century, obeyed, looking to Jesus for their salvation.

When people obeyed the gospel of Christ in the first century they obeyed immediately because they saw the urgency. They were willing to leave father, mother, friends, and their present religious affiliations in order to obey. They were willing to face afflictions and trials to obey. And even in spite of the afflictions they had joy and thanksgiving in their obedience. And in all of it they looked to Jesus Christ as the source of their salvation. This is the spirit in which we must obey the gospel today.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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