

Punishment, Reward, Love

Obedience! Not many like the sound of the term, especially when applied to them. Be that as it may be, the facts remain that our Creator demands it, not only by virtue of a right of ownership, but also as an indicator of love. Jesus said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you” (John 15:14). Similarly, Jesus stated, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Jehovah uses three principles to motivate individuals to do that which is in their best interest to do, and which bring glory to the Father: fear of Punishment, promise of Reward, and Love. These three avenues are used by most parents. If a child does not do as instructed, there are unpleasant consequences. If a child does what is expected, there may even be a promise of reward in the way of allowances, or privileges. However, though the parent may use the first two to encourage and secure obedience, what they desire more than anything is a child’s obedience motivated by love.

Obedience is defined as “to hear, to listen,” with an ethical significance of hearing with reverence and obedient assent. Thus, we are dealing with the act of “hearing under,” or of subordinating oneself to the person or thing heard, hence, “to obey.”

Six elements of obedience.

(1) Action: Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

(2) No additions to God’s truth: Jesus said, concerning the word of God, “thy word is truth” (John 17:17). In reference to the law, Jehovah said, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

(3) No subtractions from the truth: Jehovah said, “neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God” (Ibid.).

(4) No substitutions to the truth: Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron were devoured by fire that came forth from before Jehovah, because they “offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them” (Leviticus 10:1-2).

(5) Obedience requires that the action be authorized: Paul said, “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17).

(6) Obey God rather than man: Having been instructed by the ruling class to cease their proclaiming of the gospel, Peter said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Ross Triplett, Sr.