

# God Requires Obedience

By

Rev. John J. McCave

Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, requires very little from mankind. There is a specific thing that He does want, however. God told Adam clearly and succinctly. Almighty God had given Adam everything; He had given him dominion over the earth. He gave him authority over the world before He took him out of the dust of the ground.

God gave it to him because He decided to, not because Adam had earned such a gift. God chose to give it to him. It wasn't because you were righteous that God has chosen to save you, either it is by grace. The Lord God Almighty set before Adam one requirement to prove his love. He gave him one condition that could keep him in the position that he belonged – the humble place, underneath the Almighty God who created all things and gave him all things. It's not very far below God, Adam would have dominion over the earth, but it is a place of humility. He was to obey God's command.

Genesis 2:16 and 17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

God not only gave him the command. He also told him the consequence if he chooses not to obey. He told Adam exactly what that consequence would be. God has chosen obedience as the test of an individual's love, honor, and reverence for Him.

Throughout the Scriptures, God sought out men who would obey Him and, believe it or not, there were very few. Compared to the billions of people who have ever lived, very few have endeavored to do His will.

One of the great men of the Bible is Abraham, in the book of Genesis. Abraham is set forth as the standard of faith. The prototype of faith, Abraham is the father of all those who believe. Every time God said something to Abraham, he trusted what God said, and he obeyed it. He walked out on the Word God gave him; this is what faith looks like.

Faith is not being told something and saying, "That sounds good, but I'll do something else." That's not faith. Faith is doing what you have been told to do. Abraham was told to get up and go, and he got up and went. [Geneses 12:1-4] But the most significant test of Abraham is the record in Genesis chapter 22.

Genesis 22:1-3:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here* I am.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

When I consider this record, I am in awe of this extraordinary man. He has such an intimate relationship with God Almighty. Abraham has proven God and trusted Him with everything in his life. God has given him a son, Isaac, in his old age with his wife, Sarah. God has proven himself to Abraham.

This test wasn't the first one; it was one of the last. Abraham had such an obedient relationship with God; he doesn't even ask, "Why?" He doesn't ask God, "Are you sure that's what you want? Isaac? The young boy you gave me? The child I love?" Abraham does something so remarkable. He just gets up in the morning, and he goes.

Abraham's faith and obedience to God's command are beyond the comprehension of most people. But it is the reason God says of Abraham; this is my friend. Abraham is the only man in the Bible, known as the friend of God.

Verse 4:

Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

Abraham has had three days to walk- three days to fellowship with his son. Consider how much of a temptation would it have been to second-guess the revelation that he's received? I know what it would have done to me. He has had three days to consider whether or not this is the right thing to do. Is this what the LORD truly wants? Maybe I heard it wrong. He has had three days to contemplate sacrificing the son that he loves.

Verses 5-7:

And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

Isaac is about twenty years old at this time. Abraham is about a hundred and ten. And Isaac wants to know, well, where's the lamb?

Verses 8-11:

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

He is still peaceful enough to hear from his God, isn't he? He said, "Here am I."

Verse 12:

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

How does this obedience work? God knows that you fear and reverence Him when you choose to obey Him. That is the test and the proof. That's the real deal in your relationship with God.

Verses 13-18:

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD [Yahweh, the Almighty God], for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;  
And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

This was a test. Now, for those who don't believe that God can tempt, it says very clearly in James that God does not tempt with evil. It doesn't say that He doesn't test. Your whole life is a test, in case you haven't figured that one out.

In the church, we celebrate the last week of our Lord's life. We look at all the things that he's done. He gave up his life, and God raised him from the dead. Just as Jesus Christ was a willing sacrifice, I believe Isaac had to have been a willing offering. The reason I think this is because one hundred and ten-year-old men don't chase down and wrestle twenty-year-old men. Isaac obeyed his father. It doesn't say that in the scriptures, but I believe it is a type of what God would do with His Son. God chose to give His only begotten Son, and he had to die for our salvation. Abraham had reasoned it out. Because Isaac was the promised child, the one from whom the Messiah would come, he had already reasoned that God would have to raise him from the dead. [Hebrews 11: 17-19]

Abraham knew God was going to have to do something because this was God's promised seed. Consider what Abraham is putting on the line? As incredibly difficult, it must have been to put his son on the altar. Abraham is also putting his eternal life on the line because Abraham knew the Messiah would come through Isaac's bloodline. But this man loves, honors, and trusts the Almighty God he is willing to reverence and obeyed, no matter what it cost.

Oh, that we would get to that place in our lives! It is my great desire to be at that place. And my prayer to God is to strengthen me. And I hope you realize, God does not start with testing us. He begins with the promise that He will bless, prosper, and take care of us. All we have to do is get up and go where God tells us to go. It's the same way he started with Abraham.

He has given us a very similar promise, hasn't He? Those of you who have answered His call passed the first test. Now, as you keep going, there's more. There will be more promises and more information that you will become aware of as life goes on. There will be more direction that God will instruct you to do. And you will come to that crossroads in your growth where you will have to decide whether or not you're going to obey Him.

Obedience is always what God has wanted; it is proof of your love for Him. The type of obedience that He wants is absolute. It's simple. Just as my father used to tell me when I was a kid, "Just do what you're told." Obey what God says in His Word and when He reveals His will to you.

Abraham had already obeyed in his heart before he sacrificed Isaac. He had already killed that child in his heart, and then God stopped it. Because Abraham went through that test, God said to him; I'm going to multiply your seed like the stars in the heavens. Because of that one act of obedience, all nations are going to be blessed.

God swore that He was going to do this because of what Abraham had done. Because of how Abraham had honored Him, God swore by Himself because there's nothing greater by which He could swear. That is why no matter what happened to the children of Israel, God never swerved from fulfilling the covenant that has been made to Abraham. Even when He felt like getting rid of them all, He was faithful to His promises because He had sworn to Abraham.

I John 5:2 and 3:

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

God's commandments are not burdensome. They're not irksome. Obedience is how an individual loves God. You can't kiss Him; you can't hug Him. He is Spirit. Obedience is how He chooses to be loved. God teaches us. If you want to tell me that you love me, choose to obey me. If you really love me, honor me by doing what I have said.

You know, I have two wonderful adult children. When they were very little, they would do things for me. My daughter Christine would run up to me with a flower, or she'd draw me a picture. She'd wrap her arms around my leg and say, "Oh, I love you, daddy, I love you. I love you."

Those memories I treasured in my heart. I accepted all those things as an expression of Christine's love. But the real proof of her love for me was her obedience to me. That is what I wanted. That is what honored me as her father.

As the years have gone by, things have changed somewhat. Christine doesn't hug me around my leg anymore - I get that hug around my neck. She's taller! But the love she shares is still the same. That outburst of emotion that shows her love and care all of that beautiful heartfelt warmth would mean very little if she didn't honor me as her father.

Now that

my daughter is a woman, that aspect of our relationship has changed. I no longer expect her to obey me. The analogy breaks down at this point. But no matter how old I get, I will never graduate to adulthood. I will always be under the loving arms of Almighty God. We never become adults with Him. We are forever His children, and He wants us to obey Him.

That is how we show our love for Him. All our tears, our prayers, and all of our heartfelt words come to nothing unless we humbly obey what He has said. When we humble ourselves and place ourselves underneath the Almighty God, who has promised us all things in His Word, we prove our Love for Our Father.

The lesson is so clearly seen in that great example of Abraham. In doing God's Word, we prove our love, dedication, humility, and faith in Him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ always did the Father's will, didn't he? What God wants is obedience. What did Jesus Christ give Him? He said, "I have come to do Thy will, oh God." Jesus always did the Father's will. He said, "my words are not mine but the Father's, who sent me."

Jesus Christ came and lived his life in a specific way. You and I are to follow his example. Jesus Christ is our Lord, is he not? When he told the wind to cease, there was a great calm. When he chose to walk across the sea, no one argued with him. He laid his hands on those that were sick, and they were healed! The fevers left, the lame walked, the dumb spoke, the blind saw. He is the Lord. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He was God's anointed Messiah. Jesus Christ was the second Adam. He is the one who demonstrated God's power. You can see this in detail in the four gospels.

Jesus Christ walked in the power and authority that the Father gave him. Everything was subject to him. But he was always doing the will of his Father. He didn't come the first time as the one who would reign as the King over Israel. The Jews that did not believe couldn't accept that; they expected a conquerer. They miss understood that there were two parts to his coming in the Bible. Isaiah wrote about His righteous servant, the branch that was to come. Isaiah wrote about the one who would be rejected and die in the fifty-third chapter. But the Jews did not understand these Scriptures.

Jesus Christ came to fulfill the mission. He understood what that job was. He understood that he did not come to reign as king this time; he came to preach the gospel. He came to bring deliverance. He came to preach this wonderful Kingdom of God and to make it known.

The first time, he came to die as the substitute offering to pay for the sins of mankind. He knew this.

Matthew 12:40:

For as Jonas [Jonah] was three nights in the whale's [sea monster's] belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Mark 8:31-33:

And he [Jesus Christ] began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Jesus Christ began to make known that he would be rejected and that he was going to be despised. He was going to be killed, and then God would raise him on the third day.

Peter may have said, that's wrong, what's the matter with you? Don't you believe God? How could that be? I don't know what he said; it is not recorded, but it wasn't good. He stuck his foot in his mouth, and the Lord turned around to Peter and said, "get thee behind me, Satan," because that's where the attack was coming from. You aren't thinking about what God wants. You're thinking about what you want.

Well, I want to tell you something. Abraham wasn't thinking about what he wanted. He just got up and went. He didn't even ask the question. Jesus Christ is telling them the truth. But they don't understand it. Well, we don't understand everything either, do we? We're all in good company. We don't understand everything. But instead of rebuking the Lord, let's just shut up and do what we're told and believe what we're told to believe. That would be a much better response. God has made this known to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ knew what was going to happen. He knew what he had to do. And yet, to Peter, it was all about his earthly perspective.

Jesus Christ is the Lord. Well, let's just believe what he says! That's the wise thing to do. Let's carry out the Word of God in our lives because that is what our Lord did. He was the Messiah! Jesus could stop the rain, the wind, and the sea, yet he was on a mission. Jesus Christ knew he was the Lamb of God and that he was here to redeem us with his blood.

Jesus Christ knew that he would have to suffer and die. He understood it, and he was going to accomplish his mission and give his life freely as a sacrifice for us. For us! Jesus Christ never forgot who he was. Forty hours before they put him to death, he was standing in front of the high priest.

Matthew 26:62-65:

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What *is it which* these witness against thee?

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou has said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

The high priest said to Jesus Christ, "I adjure you in the name of the living God, tell me whether or not you are the Christ." And Jesus Christ said, "I am." And I want to tell you something else, the next time you see me, Mister High Priest. I'm going to be returning in power and the glory of God in the clouds. He never forgot who he was. He never forgot that he's coming back.

Then he stood before Pontius Pilate. Pilate asked Jesus if he is the Christ.

John 18:33 and 34:

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Did you learn this, or did somebody else tell you? Do you know this? In other words, are you a believer? Let's find out if you're a believer first. And then Pilate shows his colors.

Verses 35 and 36:

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate couldn't find anything wrong with him. And he went back outside and told them. I find no fault in this man. He's not trying to usurp anybody; he's not trying to overthrow the kingdom. There's no legal precedent for this.

Pilate does not want him to be put to death. Pilate really wants this man to go free. He knows that this is just envy. He knows it's just a religious thing, and he can't find anything wrong with Jesus.

He tries to satisfy the crowd by beating him and having a crown of thorns placed on his head. He tries to appease them so that they would want mercy for him. But they just kept at it with bloody cries of, "Crucify him, crucify him." Then finally, they backed Pilate into a corner.



John 19:10:

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Pilate is baffled because Jesus was not responding like a man who was pleading for his life. Jesus wasn't giving him any assistance with answers or statements that would keep him from the sentence of death. Our Lord knew his mission. He knew why he came; it was to be the sin offering he was fulfilling God's will.

Verse 11:

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Pilate had no authority over the lord, and Jesus tells him that God was allowing him to do this.

Our Lord willingly gave his life for us. Jesus willingly sacrificed himself, knowing that His Father would have given him twelve legions of angels. All our lord had to do was ask his Father. If you remember, he said this to Peter in the garden.

Twelve legions are equal to seventy-two thousand angels. When God judged the Assyrians, one angel went through the camp. One hundred and eighty-five thousand men were dead in the morning. That was one angel.

[II Kings 19:35]

Jesus Christ was obeying his Father. Our Lord obeyed God, even unto death, the death of the cross.[ Philippians 2:8b]. He chose to do it because he loved God with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Jesus Christ believed the promises that God had given to him. He believed that God would raise him on the third day. He believed that God would cause him to sit on David's throne. Our lord believed the promises concerning the hope - the promises that were made to Abraham.

There was only one time in the garden that he went to God three times and said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Jesus Christ didn't want this. Who would? He was a human being, a man. He felt it. He felt not only the agony of the physical pain, but he also felt the rejection. But he never forgot who he was, and he never forgot what was coming.

Hebrews 12:2:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He endured that cross. Why? Because of the joy that was set before him. Eternity! Paradise! He will come back to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus Christ trusted that God would raise him from the dead. The Scriptures tell us that God is going to raise us, also. We have the same opportunity to believe what God has promised. Unless our Lord comes back in our lifetime, none of us are getting out of here alive. But I do not doubt that God will raise us and change us, and we will be with the Lord forever.

If you do believe it, that means that you are going to obey the lord. In your daily life, you obey God and His Word, you honor Him, and you do everything in your power to do as the gospel instructs. You hold forth that Word to others, pray, and rely upon Him.

Because you have been bought with a price, your life is not your own. You've been bought with the price of your Lord and Savior's blood.

John 14: 23

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Now, if you do that, your life will be filled with a lot of sacrifices. It's not going to be about you. It's going to be about ministering to others. It's going to be about preaching the Word. It's going to be about doing the Father's business, not your own. That's how Jesus Christ served. That's how he ministered and loved his disciples. The choice that is before us will we walk in his steps and commit our lives to God and obey His commands as our Lord did?

Ask God to help you and provide you with strength and wisdom to carry out His Word in our lives.

I Peter 2:21

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Jesus Christ has paid the price for us. Let us live for him and let us honor our God. All God has ever wanted from us is to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The way we do that is to obey His Word and to love one another.



