

THE AGELESS CONFLICT



AARON J. CAREY

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INTRODUCTION: GOD'S TRUE PEOPLE OBEY HIS VOICE

Obedience to God is what characterizes God's true people in every age. God's people, those whom He accounts as righteous, are always those that are presently obeying Him and keeping His commandments according to the light which they have available to them. This has been true from the beginning, and will always be so. The full revelation of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ in the New Covenant never changed this fact the slightest bit. Furthermore, the chief opponents of God's true people have always been people with a disobedient attitude towards God. In many cases these claim to be the people of God, but in fact are not. The true people of God obey and serve Him on His terms. The false people of God often call God's true people heretics (or something similar) for standing on the Word of God and not receiving a counterfeit faith which denies the true God's requirement for man's obedience and/or twists the words of God somehow to change the obedience the true God expects into something else, whatever that might be.

Whether or not we will surrender to the true God and obey His commandments on the terms of His Word without self-imposed conditions is the ageless conflict. Counterfeit Christianity can be recognized by any "Christianity" that one can adopt without settling this conflict on the Lord's side in truth. This is a foundational matter of the Christian faith that needs to be set straight. There is nothing genuinely higher or deeper to the Christian life but that which has at its foundation a right response to this ageless conflict.

This book is about proving that this is the ultimate issue for mankind from the whole Bible, Old and New Testament; and showing how this conflict unfolds in Scripture in the many lessons it has for us. It is good to learn from these so we'll be on the right side of this monumental conflict, as there are only two sides, and all must be on one side or the other. Our eternal salvation depends on our getting on the right side and remaining on it until the end of our lives (Matthew 24:13). We will look closely at Scripture to prove this. It's best to look at what the Word of God says and not at the philosophies of men which complicate Scripture unnecessarily and seek to explain away the plain words of God. If someone critiques this book and says that I reference or quote the Bible too much, I'll take that as a compliment. If there seems to be too much repetition, with the same point emphasized constantly, it's because it is necessary to vindicate the truth of God's Word on this crucial issue from all the lies and confusion that constantly surround and oppose it.

We will look much at lessons from the Old Testament. It's amazing how the Old Testament is about 70% of the Bible, yet often professing Christians treat the Old Testament like it's irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus honored and upheld the Old

Testament (Matthew 5:17-18, John 10:35, etc) and the Apostles said that all that which is in the Old Testament is for our example (1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Romans 15:4, etc). The New Testament writers referred to the Old Testament to illustrate and prove their points *constantly*. Many are ashamed to reference it much at all now. This no doubt has to do with all of the various false doctrines that Satan has subtly brought into Christendom which explain away the need for obedience for us in New Testament times. Obviously such doctrine would never be taken seriously were the lessons in the Old Testament not explained away or ignored altogether.

It is no wonder that the issue of obedience to God then is the chief issue that Satan seeks to oppose and brings confusion over. All the negative impressions which professing Christians have over phrases like "obedience to God", "doing right in the eyes of the Lord", "walking acceptably to the Lord", and "being worthy of God's kingdom" verifies that. These are all things that Jesus and the Apostles talked about constantly, as we'll see. (What right do we have to subtract from the Word of God?) The truths given in this book will be verified from the New Testament as the two Testaments complement each other perfectly and are never in opposition to each other. The same God who never contradicts Himself gave both.

Titus 2:11-15 states: *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."* (Titus 2:11-15)

No one will deny that true Christianity is characterized by the grace of God. Since that's the case, according to these verses from Titus 2, true Christianity then is characterized by obedience in learning to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar (unique, special) people, zealous of *good works*. And furthermore, gospel ministers should speak, and exhort, rebuke with all authority regarding these truths; and let no man despise them. *This is what the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men teaching!* It's interesting how the truths that we come to when taking God's Word at face value are so different than the doctrines that are so commonly preached and considered "sound doctrine."

Many who've gone to church their whole lives have never truly heard about the grace of God that brings salvation- except maybe negatively! When we let the Bible speak for itself, some things which are commonly called heresy are discovered to actually be sound doctrine; and some things which are commonly called sound doctrine are discovered to really be heresy. Imagine a gospel minister actually teaching his hearers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts that they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world- and actually exhorting them to do so and actually rebuking those who are disobedient. Well, done in line with the rest of Scripture, and an obedient life of his own, he would be a true teacher of the grace of God! But the standard doctrine now is that we can't live that way anyway- and that even if we could it wouldn't have an impact on our salvation. Lies! The true grace of God has been turned into a license for disobedience and immorality. We need to live out and

contend for the true faith where obedience to God's Word is expected, required, and by the promises and the grace of God, regarded as possible. Jesus Christ is Lord as well as Savior, and we have no right to despise Him in His office as Lord/King and to presume He'll still exercise His office of Savior towards us while we rebel against His royal throne. Nor do we have the right to limit His capacity as Savior to only deliverance from the guilt of sin, and not from the power/dominion of sin as well.

There are lies not only regarding our need to be obedient, but also counterfeit versions of obedience to God that can stumble us as well. That is why we need to look at the examples and lessons of true and false obedience in Scripture. For example, we'll see early on that there is Cain, who stopped short of unconditional surrender to God, and yet still tried to offer *something* to the Lord. We'll see from the story of the Golden Calf that we need to be worshipping the right God (don't laugh, this is really an issue -our concept of God must be taken from how He's revealed Himself in the Bible). Then there's the example of King Saul, who did what God asked of him- *with an exception* (which God considered a very big deal). And then of course there are the Pharisees. No, their problem wasn't that they obeyed God's Word as many erroneously think their problem was. They made up a bunch of their own laws which they sought to use as a license to disobey God's Word and/or made their (alleged) obedience to God's commandments an external formality. They ignored the true intentions of God's commandments, which make it necessary that we be obedient in the thoughts and intents of our hearts (John 4:23-24).

This ageless, ultimate conflict starts with God's Word versus Satan's at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. That is where we'll start too. The rest of the Bible is the extension and unfolding of this conflict, as all of

human history really is also. The chapters in this book are not perfectly chronological, though in general they will flow from the beginning of the Bible towards the end. It seemed good, for example, to put the chapter about serving the right God earlier than it would appear if left in chronological order. The chapter about a right response to sin and failure, detailing the contrast between King Saul and King David, fit in better among the New Testament chapters. The two appendixes at the end deal with issues that didn't exactly fit in the flow of the book yet are issues that are relevant to the book's content and could not be overlooked. One of these looks at the OT story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego because of the lessons it gives for Christians in suffering tribulation.

It should be said too at the beginning that there is really only one type of Christianity. We could think that with all of the different churches and teachings that exist now that there are many varieties which we can choose from, like people choose ice cream flavors. But Christianity is not a Baskin-Robbins ice cream shop! No, I'm not trying to plug a certain church/group. What I am saying is that the Bible is full of objective truth which we must seek and align ourselves with. If a thousand different people are honestly doing that they'll be coming closer together in their understanding of truth and the way they worship God.¹ There is no real Christianity

1 Two other truths stem from this: False unity is when people come together in worship not based on truth (i.e. the attitude of "we have different gods and/or different ways of serving God, but let's just be one since that's not a big deal anyway.") The other truth is that people's dishonesty with Scripture and seeking their own position/comfort/convenience explains much regarding how so many denominations have formed that claim to have the truth. So we see how both unity and disunity can potentially come through man's own betrayal of the true God and acceptance of lies based upon what people

besides the Apostolic Christianity we have before us in the Bible (Ephesians 4:4-6). Imagine people in the same city as the Apostle John or the Apostle Paul in the first-century who called themselves Christians, yet didn't fellowship at the Apostle's church and submit to the Apostle's authority, though they knew what was taught and practiced at the Apostolic fellowship. If that doesn't sound ridiculous, it should (though such people existed in the first-century for sure, but they were rebels against God/Christ). Whenever we choose a church based on what we like rather than because of its faithfulness to the Word of God and openness to be corrected by the Word of God, we have then in that case chosen our own terms of serving God, instead of God's terms of serving Him. And the scary thing is that if you don't love the truth there are plenty of convenient options for church available that will tell you what you want to hear and overlook the truth you don't want to heed, providing a false comfort and security to those who are resisting the truth (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The true, Apostolic gospel message is that which calls us to obey God and keep His commandments in holiness. There is a bitter conflict that can be traced to the beginning of time which this call fits into. Let's understand it and prepare ourselves accordingly, that we might come out on the right side of it!

The gospel is: **"Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord², which was made of the seed of David**

think is in their best advantage according to their current circumstances.

2 Underlines in Scripture passages in this book are from me, for the sake of extra emphasis related to the point I'm seeking to get across and/or related to the general theme of this book. All of God's Word should be emphasized however, and therefore all Scripture quotations are in bold. The Scriptures in italics are those which introduce and/or summarize the point of

according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." (Romans 1:3-5)

The Apostle Paul's summary of his ministry:
"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified³ by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed" (Romans 15:16-18).

a chapter in considerable detail.

3 (i.e. made holy)



CHAPTER 1: IS MAN A LAW UNTO HIMSELF? GOD'S WORD VERSUS SATAN'S

“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.” (Genesis 2:16-17)

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:4-6)

I once heard a man present the gospel at a street meeting who started his message in a way which I had never heard before. The question which he asked his audience at the beginning could not have been more

appropriate. "Do we have the right to decide right and wrong for ourselves?" Of course the prevailing answer in the audience was "Yes." He then asked them to name some of the worst people ever. Obviously names like Hitler, Stalin, and other mass murderers came up. He then told the audience something like "Okay, if each person has a right to decide right and wrong for himself, then nobody can say that any of those people (the mass murderers) were wrong." The audience didn't know how to respond to that!

The preacher's question gets to the heart of this ageless conflict and the true gospel message. The conflict began in the Garden of Eden when God gave Adam and Eve a simple command- a command with the greatest of implications. Would they give glory to God and honor His supreme authority as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe? Would they receive what God had said and lean on that in spite of the temptation to get (what seemed to be) the benefits of taking the forbidden fruit? Or would they listen to the tempter's suggestion *who (basically) told them that they could be their own gods and know good and evil without having to listen to the Lord telling them how to live and what to do?* Would they believe God's Word which said that transgressing Him would in fact bring a deadly consequence that they could not see the possibility of, judging by their natural senses? Was what God had freely given them enough? Or did they need what He forbade them from having? We know that they made the wrong choice when it came to these questions. Hence the fall. The consequences being the connection to God in the human spirit broken (spiritual death), (eventual) physical death, mourning, sorrow, and pain introduced into a world thrown into chaos as its perfect Creator and Designer was disobeyed. A world with its original perfect order and harmony broken by the rebellion of the creatures made in God's image.

SIN'S TRUE FACE

We see in the awful consequences of the fall the true face of sin. It would be impossible for the consequences to have been anything other than these awful things. The God of the Bible is the essence of love, goodness, righteousness, etc. Sin is worse than just hurting other people (though all transgression of God's commandments does hurt someone, somehow). It is rebellion against the highest authority and the highest good, the One whose commands are for the best for all when obeyed. There is something evil about disobedience to God that words cannot express. There is something about it that inherently brings chaos and shame into the world. Disobedience to God is unspeakably evil because of the justice and excellence of His commandments, which stem from His perfectly Just and Excellent character, which is dishonored when He is disobeyed.

The God of the Bible is not a malicious dictator who gives commands to satisfy His own ego. God is jealous for His name because He would be corrupt to not be! He must punish rebellion against Himself with the severest punishment or He would be a criminal who was complicit with evil otherwise. His will (expressed by what He commands) is given in perfect wisdom and knowledge; *to obey God's Word is to do what's best for all of creation and to disobey Him is (essentially) to proclaim one's own self to be god, to follow Satan, to trouble the Universe.* It is just eternal truth that not even God Himself can change (just as the Bible says that it is impossible for God to lie) that all things should revolve around Him. When a created being who owes his existence to the God who created all things seeks to put him/herself in God's place, they are following a vain lie and calling others to that lie. This is why it is vain to worship a person or any other

created being or object; and why it is simply logical and right to worship God.

Disobedience to God does indeed hurt people as well. If man had never transgressed against God there would be no sorrow, death, pain, mourning, etc. Consider a world where no one lies, steals, has sex outside of God's boundary of marriage⁴, no one is greedy nor envious of another, all authority (government, parents, etc) is just and honest, where there was no rebellion against authority, no murder or malicious hatred, where all were sober and considerate of others' considerations, etc, etc. That would be a good world! And why is the world not that way? Because the great majority of mankind is suppressing God's truth and dishonoring His commandments! Otherwise this world would be the world described above. Though not all are equally malicious, all who walk careless of God's commandments and thereby decide right and wrong for themselves, are part of the core/root problem that corrupts and defiles the world.

**THIS IS THE END OF THE PREVIEW OF
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4 How much heartache, pain, and trouble can be traced to the disobedience to God's commandments in this area alone?