

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
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“Complete Obedience”
Worship – Part III of III
John 14:21

Music dominated my life as a child, and I the trumpet in particular was a huge part of my life. For years I was part of the marching band - in high school and then at the University of Arizona. Any other marching band alumni here? Marching band is about precision and conformity. You have to get dozens of individuals and many different instruments and a variety of music to all work together. Everyone has to submit to a master plan.

This is a Video clip from the University of Hawaii. Wasn't that cool? They made a player, who kicked the ball! Everyone working together. The Band Director's plan perfectly executed! But what a disaster if the person at the end of the line suddenly decided to go their own



way! Marching band is not a place for someone who has trouble with submitting to authority. The MIT Marching band website says: "If you're marching to the beat of a different drummer, you're probably out of step- pay attention!" But when everyone works together they are able to create something beautiful!

In many ways the church is like a marching band. God has the master plan and He calls every member of His church to submit to it – to obey His word and follow his leading. If we are willing to do this – the church will be a beautiful expression of His love.

But it is easier said than done. Is there anyone here, who like me, struggles with day-to-day obedience? Do you have a hard time giving up what you want to do, and instead embracing God's plan? That is the battle – and that is what we are going to talk about because today our subject is obedience – but not obedience in general... We are going to focus our attention on obedience in the context of worship.

In this series called “Church Works” we are talking about our first purpose – “worshiping.” Two weeks ago we studied worshiping as being fully surrendered. Last week - worshiping as remembering, and today –worshiping as obeying.

PREVIEW

And to do that we will briefly look at four case studies that combine worship and obedience - or lack of obedience - because like in most case studies these are negative examples from which we, hopefully, will learn some lessons!

CASE STUDIES

Example #1

Our first two examples of obedience and worship are from the life of King Saul. Turn with me to the book of 1 Samuel, chapter 13. In this story, Saul is waiting for Samuel to arrive make a sacrifice to the Lord and then the army would be ready to battle the Philistines. Basically – God required a mandatory worship service before the battle! A time of submission, prayer and calling on the Lord to give them victory. And Samuel, God said, must be the one to make the sacrifice. But Samuel is late, and Saul is eager to fight.

1Sam. 13:8 Now he (Saul) waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. I have never been in battle, but I have heard that the waiting prior to battle is almost the worst part – as you contemplate what might happen. In this case, Israel has waited seven days and some of the soldiers were getting cold feet and leaving, for Israel was greatly outnumbered.

1Sam. 13:9 So Saul said, “Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. 1Sam. 13:10 As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; Of course! It is like Samuel is waiting in the bushes. The narrator gives us the impression this was a test of Saul’s obedience to the Lord, which he had failed. And Saul went out to meet him *and* to greet him. 1Sam. 13:11 But Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, 1Sam. 13:12 therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.”

We are so good at rationalizing sin, aren’t we? “Come on Sam,” Saul said, “The soldiers were nervous and some were leaving. You were late and the enemy was about to attack. All I wanted was the Lord’s blessing. So, I forced myself to make the sacrifice. Hey you do the next one, OK.”

But God had told Saul **that Samuel** was to make the offering, and Saul was to wait. NOTHING more! 1Sam. 13:13 Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the

LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. This is the botched sacrifice that cost Saul the kingdom, and it is a warning to all of us. I think a good lesson from this case study is the following: **Worship without obedience is costly.** To enter into an act of worship, without obedience will cost you something, you do not want to give up.

Example #2

Turn a few pages over to our second case study - 1 Samuel chapter 15. Did Saul learn his lesson? This time, Saul was commanded by the Lord to wipe out an evil people called the Amalekites. And this included killing all the animals. Saul comes to him again.

1Sam. 15:13 Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." I have to believe that Saul is thinking about the rejected sacrifice in chapter 13. 1Sam. 15:14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Like when I used to call to my kids, "Is the TV off?" "Yes Dad." "Then why do I hear Sponge Bob's voice?" If the TV is off - I shouldn't hear the sponge talking!" 1Sam. 15:15 Saul tries to distance himself from the problem. Saul said, "They (those people over there) have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, (and it is all for a good cause) to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." "Hey - it's the people's fault. But what can you do? At least their intent was good!" But Saul was lying - he was the one actually who gave the order to keep the best animals alive. Verse 22: 1Sam. 15:22 Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed

than the fat of rams. Samuel gives Saul a math lesson: Obedience > sacrifice! It is of a higher value in God's kingdom.

And again the consequence: 1Sam. 15:23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."

In the first example, Saul lost the extension of his kingdom, now he has been fully rejected by God as King. Again we see the same lesson, that: **Worship without obedience is costly.**

When we come to God trying to play the field. Trying to have it both ways. When we bring our open, unrepented sin into the presence of God, in worship - especially as Christian leaders - we are in danger of God taking away our blessing – of him removing us from whatever position we hold. Worship without obedience will cost us something.

Example #3

Our third example is from Isaiah the prophet. A couple hundred years have now gone by since the days of Saul. And now instead of the King sinning – the people have fallen into sin and idolatry. But they continue to gather together in public worship.

...What we have in the following passage is one of the harshest rebuke in all the pages of Scripture. It is like listening into an angry parent disciplining their child – we are shocked and uncomfortable by the severity of the rebuke, even though it is justified.

Is. 1:11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. Is. 1:12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Is. 1:13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer,

Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. [Is. 1:14](#) “I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*. [Is. 1:15](#) “So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

Now, just quickly remember that God Himself command the people to observe the feasts; God told the people to bring the sacrifices and offering, to pray with lifted hands. From this passage we might wrongly assume that the acts in and of themselves were sinful – but NO! That was not the problem. The problem again was disobedience. God commanded. They were told to repent: [Is. 1:16](#) “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. From Saul we learned that worship without obedience was costly. Here we learn that **worship without obedience is worthless**. That which had great value and worth – without obedience is now 180 degree opposite – it is offensive and rank to the Lord.

A few years ago we had an infestation of rats in our home. And after unsuccessfully trying to capture them, I put out rat poison - which they ate and then died – in the walls, under the counters and the smell – oh – it was the worst smell I have ever smelled. The rats had to be removed for our home to be a fragrant pleasant place again. Sin is like a dead rat in the church – it causes what would otherwise be a beautiful offering to be offensive.

Example #4

So far we have had three example and two lesson. Worship without obedience is costly and it is worthless. This last example is from the New Testament, Matthew Chapter 5. Perhaps the most sad story of them all. The setting is the church being mobilized to raise money to meet needs.

Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, Acts 5:2 and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. The offering, this time, is not a ram or sheep – but an offering of money.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? Acts 5:4 "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." They sold the land, but kept back a portion for themselves and presented the offering as if it was the total amount. Acts 5:5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. And you know the story – the wife is also questioned by the apostles – she also **lies** and dies.

And now the harshest lesson – **worship without obedience is dangerous!** Remember also Paul's warning about the Lord's Table. Same lesson. Worship without obedience is literally dangerous.

WHY SUCH A BIG DEAL? – john 14:21

And so... if you want know what pushes God's buttons – I think we have found it. Worship with open, unconfessed sin. Worship with lies. Worship with greed. Worship God on Sunday and idols on Monday... is a great offense to a holy God. Or to state our final lesson: **Worship without obedience makes God angry.**

God who is normally long-suffering and patient with our sins. God who is regularly slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness – it seems in the context of worship he is especially upset.

And I want to now just explore with you for a few minutes “why?” Why does God react this way? What is in the character of God that gives him righteous anger in response to tainted worship? The first thing that comes to mind is that God is Holy. He hates sin – all the time. And of course this is true. God can't stand sin being brought into his presence. And that is certainly part of it.

But I would propose to you that there may be something else going on. And it might surprise you. I think God is so serious about worship because he is so serious about love, and the role love is to play in our relationship with Him. God is not like the other man-made Gods of this world who are all distant and impersonal. He is personal and his relates to us based on love, and love is interpreted in our relationship as obedience.

Obedience is the essence of our love relationship with God. John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, (the one who obeys) he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” Follow the logic - our relationship with God – the giving and receiving of love is summed up in faithful obedience.

Move one more step now to the Bible's teaching of the church as the Bride of Christ. When we come to God, our bridegroom with a smile on our lips ask for His blessing and protection while at the same time we are in rebellion, lusting after other gods and idols, we are committing spiritual adultery. Our love commitments have been violated. Because God loves you so deeply – he reacts strongly when that love is violated.

If you have ever been betrayed by a close friend, or a spouse – then you will begin to get a sense of what is going on relationally when we enter into worship with open flagrant sin. Like when Julius Caesar was killed. Caesar treated Marcus Brutus as a son. He mentored and taught the boy, and brought him into his confidence. According to Roman historians, Caesar first resisted the onslaught of the assassins. But when he saw Brutus, the one he loved, among them with his dagger drawn, Caesar ceased to struggle and, pulling the top part of his robe over his face, asked the famous question, "You too, Brutus?"

Saul and Israel made the mistake of treating God as if here were just another of many deities in the land - just detached and cold, impersonal gods, vending machine gods - requiring payment to render services with no expectation of love.

But our God is not like that. We are in a relationship with God – and God is jealous of our affection and devotion. Jesus said: [Matt. 6:24](#) "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. Our disobedience in worship makes God angry and sad– yes because He is holy – but perhaps more so because we are in a love relationship with Him, and our sin violates that sacred trust.

REFLECTION ON OBEDIENCE AT LCCC

Let's now, as we have done before – discuss what this looks like at Lake Cities – when we gather to worship God. Again, many of the elements of our service help us to worship God through our obedience.

We often sing songs that encourage obedience. Pay careful attention to the words of our closing song today – it is a summary of this sermon! We also often offer times of confession of sin. Often, too, at the Lord's Table we are reminded to examine ourselves and to enter worship with clean hearts. Also, every time we talk about application in response to God's word we are being encouraged to greater levels of obedience. These all help us to worship God through obedience.

But perhaps the greatest lesson this morning is that we prepare in advance for worship on Sunday. Because worship without obedience is costly. Because worship without obedience is worthless. Because worship without obedience is dangerous.

We must **Carefully prepare for worship!** How do we carefully prepare for worship? Let me give you four easy to remember steps to follow:

1) FORGIVE – Forgive others and seek forgiveness when you offend. Keep short accounts with one another. So that we have unity and peace with one another. Forgive as you have been forgiven.

2) REPENT – As God said through Isaiah – “Wash yourself and make yourself clean.” Identify sin – and turn from it. Don't bring your sin into worship.

3) OBEY – As Jesus said - Keep God's commandments. Seek to apply what you hear on Sunday, on Monday. Read the Bible always with an eye to application.

4) GET READY – Don't just think about Sunday worship on Sunday. Prepare your heart throughout the week. Pray for me and the worship team, and for God's blessing. If you know the passage – read it in advance. Go to bed early on Saturday and get to church early on Sunday. Don't come to church unprepared. Most of us are more prepared for a trip to the grocer store, then we are to worship God.

Forgive, Repent, Obey and Get Ready. Spells FROG.

Let me end with a quotation by the great Isaac Watts – 18th century pastor in England, who I think capture just about everything we have learned. Watts said, "We can never be too frequent or too solemn in the general surrender of our souls to God and binding our souls by a vow to be the Lord's forever: to love him above all things, to fear him, to hope in him, to walk in his ways in a course of holy obedience, and to wait for his mercy unto eternal life." - Isaac Watts.

Let's Pray

Heavenly Father,

This has been a pretty serious topic this morning – warnings, really, from your Word. And while we don't forget you are full of grace and patience with us. While we know we are forgiven fully in Christ; we do not want to take our relationship with you for granted. We don't want to grow cold in our love for you. We don't want to break our vows to you. And we don't want to fool ourselves by thinking it is OK to worship you with unrepentant sin. So forgive us and strengthen us to even great obedience and faithfulness to you, our Lord and our friend. In Jesus name.

Amen.