

Lesson 39
The Obedience of Faith
Hebrews 11:28

Do you ever think to yourself that God is unreasonable? Perhaps God commands you to do something that does not make much sense, or demands something of you that seems humanly impossible. Logically, this thing that God asks of you seems untenable and unreasonable. God has reasons for everything He does, but we do not always understand these reasons. God often puts events or circumstances in our lives that seem unreasonable so that He might teach us the obedience of faith.

For example, God has established certain institutions which at times seem unreasonable, but God has His reasons for everything, and when a person believes God and obeys His instructions, he is greatly blessed. By the eye-gate of faith, these instructions become very reasonable to the spiritual mind.

For instance, God has ordained the divine institution of marriage, and all sexual activity is to take place within this holy union. However, sometimes to the human mind this seems illogical, for our natural reasoning tells us we should not have to be married before we can partake of sex with another, especially if two people seemingly are in love with one another. Yet God knows what is best for His creatures, and when we obey God He blesses. Another divine institution is government. We are told in the Bible that government is to be obeyed. This at times does not always make human sense, for some governments are corrupt, but God knows that this is what is best for His creatures.

There are also some basic Christian institutions set up by God, which all Christians are to obey such as baptism, the Lord's Table and the local church. New Christians might reason, "Why do I need to go to church, be baptized or partake of the Lord's Table if I have Christ in my heart? Why are these institutions necessary? What importance do these things have in my life?"

Institutions, whether divine or Christian, are important because God has ordained them and we are to obey God in them whether or not we can always figure out the human reasons for doing so. Moses and the children of Israel are good examples of this. They were given the ordinance of the Passover and the orders of God were to be obeyed whether they understood all of God's reasoning or not. ***"By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them."*** (Heb. 11:28).

The Passover was the first ordinance given to Israel. The Passover had great significance for Israel and this ordinance also has great meaning to us, true Christians in the church of Jesus Christ. Let us turn to Exodus 12 to get the full impact of the obedience of faith as displayed by Moses and the children of Israel.

THE BACKGROUND FOR THE PASSOVER - Exodus 11:9-10

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.’ And Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.” -- God commanded Moses to represent Him to Pharaoh and demand the release of God’s people, Israel. God’s judgments had been poured out on Egypt, its king and people. God gave Moses signs and miracles intended to serve as credentials of the almighty God, but Pharaoh’s magicians were able to duplicate these signs and miracles. God sent plagues to frighten the Egyptian Pharaoh, but after nine plagues a crisis had arrived. Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the children of Israel go. He had become so hardened that he threatened Moses’ life.

“Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!’ And Moses said, ‘You are right; I shall never see your face again!’” (Exodus 10:28-29)

Moses not only suffered the possibility of death at Pharaoh’s hands, but also Moses’ reputation was at stake with the nation of Israel. In nine attempts, Moses had failed to make his promises good to deliver the children of Israel. This seemed to be an impossible situation, for the king’s heart was hardened and the people were beginning to complain and murmur, questioning Moses’ ability to lead the people.

What did Moses say? “This is impossible; this is totally ridiculous -- I quit!” No, Moses was patient, and he persisted in obedience, trusting God to act. He knew that God had a divine solution to the problem.

THE PASSOVER PREPARATION - Exodus 12:1-3, 5-8, 11

“Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt ...” -- God did finally act for Moses. He revealed to Moses His plan to deliver Israel from Egypt. This plan is referred to as the Passover.

God often waits until the last minute when the heat is on to reveal His plan to His servants. Sometimes His servants get impatient and make their own plans and this gets them into lots of trouble, but this was not the case with Moses.

“This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you. Speak to the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of the month they are each one to take a lamb for each household.’” -- Hebrews 11:28 says that Moses “kept” the Passover but this means that he not only observed it but also instituted it. Each family in Israel was to take a lamb and prepare it for sacrifice. This was to be done on the tenth day of the month of Abib.

“Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.” -- On the fourteenth day, a lamb one year old and unblemished was to be sacrificed in the late evening.

“Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.” -- The blood of the slain lamb was to be placed on the doorposts.

“And they shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.” -- The sacrificed lamb was to be eaten by the people and what was not eaten was to be burned.

“Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste -- it is the LORD’S Passover.” -- The sacrificed lamb was to be eaten as the Hebrews were getting ready to make a hasty exit early in the morning.

Notice that God gave these intricate details of the Passover -- ritual and more ritual, ceremony and more ceremony! This did not seem reasonable, for if they were going to leave Egypt, they should not have been bogged down with endless human ritual and ceremony. Humanly speaking, they should have been hurrying to and fro getting everything ready to go. But this was not God’s way. They were to observe the Passover and that for a very definite reason that only God understood at the time.

THE REASON FOR THE PASSOVER - Exodus 12:12-13

“For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the LORD.” -- God revealed the ritual of the Passover before He told Moses why the Passover was necessary because God’s commands are to be kept whether or not we always understand the reason for them. Every first-born child in the land of Egypt was to be struck dead by God who used the death-angel as His instrument to accomplish the task. This death would come to all the first-born in Egypt, even to those of Israel, if they did not meet God’s requirements for being passed over.

“And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” -- The only sign that God would recognize to have this plague pass by was the sign of the blood. God said, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” Blood was the only condition to escape this plague and nothing else was acceptable to God.

THE CONSEQUENCES TO THOSE WHO DID NOT OBSERVE THE PASSOVER - Exodus 12:29-30

“Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the first-born of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all of his servants and all the Egyptians and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.” -- The destroyer, the death-angel, struck every home in Egypt that was not covered by the blood.

Pharaoh and Egypt probably laughed at Moses when they heard about this tenth and last plague, but God's word is sure and true. The plague of death came to all who were not covered by the blood.

It is also interesting that it was the Pharaoh who ordered every new-born son of Israel cast into the Nile some eighty years before. God does not forget sin and His mill wheel, while it sometimes grinds slowly, grinds surely. ***“Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap”*** (Gal. 6:7).

THE SECRET TO THE PASSOVER AND THE EXODUS - Exodus 12:50-51

“Then all the sons of Israel did so; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. And it came about on that same day that the LORD brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.” -- God blessed Moses and Israel because they obeyed God. By faith they believed the ritual of the Passover and by faith they put the Passover into effect. They were persuaded that God would do what He had promised. The result was a mighty deliverance of some two million Jews out of Egypt.

What would have happened to Moses if he had not believed God? He would have failed his God and his people. Undoubtedly, he would have been removed from leadership in Israel and probably hung. But Moses did believe God. He instituted the Passover and he and Israel observed it. The result was great blessing for Moses and the people.

Moses knew that God had a plan and he was part of that plan. Moses never gave up, but he persevered in faith and God finally took the people of God out of Egypt. There was a lot to the Passover that seemed unreasonable, but by faith Moses obeyed and the people were blessed.

Just as God had a revealed will for Moses, He has a revealed will for every true Christian. God has a revealed will as stated in the Bible for each one of us and He desires the very best for us. But if we quit, if we give up, we are disobeying God and are not in the center of God's revealed will for us. If we are outside of God's revealed will, we are not in the place of God's blessing. The secret to being in the center of God's will is found in the two words **by faith**.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

The Jews were told that the Passover was to be a permanent ordinance and memorial for them. ***“Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance”*** (Exodus 12:14).

However, the Passover was merely a type or a shadow of Christ. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover. ***“... For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed”*** (1 Cor. 5:7). The ordinance of the Passover is perpetually observed today in the person of Jesus Christ and His work for sin.

Christ is the perfect Lamb of God who takes away sin. ***“The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”*** (John 1:29) He shed his blood for all who will take it by faith and apply it to the doorpost of their hearts. Christ’s shed blood is essential to our salvation. ***“... and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”*** (Heb. 9:22). Without the sprinkling of blood to one’s heart, no one can be saved. ***“... who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood ...”*** (1 Peter 1:1b,2). Only when God sees you have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ will He pass over you and release you from the bondage of sin and set your direction towards heaven!

CONCLUSION

Saved

Christian, never say that God’s ordinances, institutions, and rituals are not important. They may seem unreasonable to you at times but God has given these because they mean something to Him and because they are beneficial to you. The local church is important and is vital to your Christian life even though you may not understand all the reasons why. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is vital to honor because one day in seven rightly belongs to the Lord. Water baptism and the Lord’s Table are necessary ordinances for our Christian maturity and they mean much more to God than they do to us. If you will obey God’s ordinances and ceremonies, you shall receive a blessing -- that which at times seems unreasonable becomes reasonable by faith.

Unsaved

For you who do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, I warn you on the authority of God’s Word that God only recognizes the shed blood of Jesus Christ as sufficient to forgive sins. Sinners can only be saved on the ground of Christ’s precious blood. How must you escape God’s wrath and eternal judgment to come? Apply the blood of Christ to yourself by faith, for God says, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” Have you been sprinkled by the blood of Christ so that the death-angel will not someday whisk you away to eternal destruction? By faith, the blood of Christ must be applied to you, and only then will God let you into heaven’s glory. Only those whose lives have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ are the true children of God. Only blood-bought Christians can sing and understand this song:

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*For my pardon this I see--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
For my cleansing this my plea--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

Nothing can for sin atone--

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Naught of good that I have done--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

*This is all my hope and peace--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
This is all my righteousness--
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*