

## To Obey the Gospel

“For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17, ESV)

There are two locations in the New Testament where the phrase “obey the gospel” are used. One is spoken by Peter, the one above, and the other is spoken by Paul. (2 Thes. 1:8) Often times among brethren you may hear that a person has “obeyed the gospel” and others will rejoice at the news. Generally, this means that a person has considered their situation, has been studying scripture with Christians, realizes that a commitment must be made, hears what has been said, believes it, repents of previous sins, confesses Jesus to be the Son of God, the Lord and Christ, and puts on Christ in Immersion (i.e. “Baptism”). However, what does it mean in scripture to “obey the gospel”?

It means that when judgment begins (1 Pet. 4:17) it will be known who has and who has not been obedient to God.

It means that when Jesus returns, is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (2 Thes. 1:7) it will be known who has and who has not been obedient to God.

The phrase “obeyed the gospel,” as we often hear it, is used to speak of something in the past, the event of baptism, in the past tense. However, the manner in which both Peter and Paul use the phrase is present tense, continually walking in obedience of the gospel. The way the Bible uses the phrase, it does not just mean someone was immersed, beginning their Christian walk in faith, but also continuing to walk in obedience in the grace and mercy of God and his Christ until the end in faith not falling away when things become troubling.

Perhaps the phrase has become associated with baptism because we recognize what scripture teaches, that baptism is the act of obedience once we hear, believe, repent, and confess. Yet, initial obedience is not final obedience. We are told in the book of Revelation that Jesus sent a message to the church at Ephesus. That message told them to continue in faithfulness to God through Christ, even though persecution would test their resolve: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) Those who would be found faithful, even unto death, would be given the crown of life.

Let us consider that initial obedience at baptism was an event at the beginning, but the course of our growth as disciples is continual and does not end until the end. Let us not be afraid since the Lord has promised to aid us when we are tested so that we may each be found faithful unto death and receive the crown of life.