

Obedience that is Faith

One of the tasks of a pastor-teacher, indeed all believers, is to encourage fellow-believers.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

The news today is full of negatives. There is a war raging in Ukraine. There is another one in the Middle East. There is a potential war in Yemen. Another potential one in Taiwan. There are US troops in Syrian and Iraq who are at risk. There are problems on our borders. There is crime in our cities. People are dying from drug overdoses and suicide. If you watch the news on TV or read about it on the internet, you may think there is no hope in the world. There is no good news.

Yet, we have good news. The gospel is literally in the Greek, good news. Many pastors and commentators agree that the book of Romans is about the gospel, good news. The book of Romans is about the good news for unbelievers and for believers.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

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Salvation to eternal life is by faith in Jesus Christ. And then we live by faith. A very powerful help in the good news for the believer is Hebrews 4:1-2

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

That is faith-rest. That is how we are to live. Trusting God hour by hour, minute by minute.

Update: According to Robby Dean (to be) is often used in translations but is perhaps not the best translation for “called as (to be)”. He suggests “identified.”

Romans 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as (to be) an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Romans 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, (i.e. in the Old Testament)

Romans 1:3 concerning His Son, who was ~~born of~~ (became) a descendant (seed) of David according to the flesh,

Became. Same word used in John 1:14. There it is aorist middle indicative. Here in Romans it is aorist middle participle.

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Seed. Remember this is a theologically charged word pointing back to Genesis 3:15 and the Davidic Covenant.

Romans 1:4 who was declared appointed the Son of God with power by because of the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Now we move on to new material in Romans.

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Through whom. Jesus Christ.

Received. Robby Dean says it is aorist passive indicative¹. Other sources say it is aorist active indicative. Either way, the translations translate it as passive. The basic meaning of the word is to grasp or to seize. Over time, it also gained the sense of receiving. I wonder if Paul was smiling when he put that word in the text. Certainly what we receive in grace we don't deserve and don't do anything to get. Yet, some, like Paul seize that grace and spiritual gift and run with it (or in our vocabulary, walk by faith with it). We all have spiritual gifts. How many of us seize the grace opportunity and develop into maturity by walking by faith, gaining Bible information that can be used to move us forward in our Christian lives? Do you have a spiritual gift? Do you seize the opportunity to use it?

Grace. Per R.B. Thieme's teaching, grace is all that God can do based upon Jesus' work on the cross. And based upon our study last week, we may want to add the resurrection as well. Herman Mattox has a 12-page

¹ <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-005b/read>

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doctrine of grace which I refer you to:

https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Ephesians/notes/2022-03-13Sunday_Morning.pdf

Apostleship. This is a topic we studied some weeks ago. The key to apostleship is identifying who sends the apostle. As such, Biblically, there are three kinds of apostles: a) those that were sent by Jesus prior to His work on the cross. This apostleship was not a spiritual gift. b) those sent by Jesus after His resurrection which included the “eleven” plus Paul. This was a spiritual gift and c) those sent by the apostles and churches on specific missions which was not a spiritual gift. We also looked at a Hebrew word that is a parallel to the Greek word. We encountered this when Abraham sent a servant to find a wife for Isaac. In essence, Abraham “apostled” his servant on a mission to find a qualified bride endowing him with his authority and probably with credentials of some kind to verify he was from Abraham. Here, as Paul uses it, apostle refers to the spiritual gift based upon Jesus “sending” Paul.

To bring about. This is not in the original. The word is “into” or “toward,” a preposition, not a verb.

Obedience of faith. Obedience, here, is a word for hearing. When studying Judges, we came across the Hebrew equivalent word frequently. I gave the illustration of a father telling an errant son, “Do you hear me!” Of course the son “hears” his father. But the word is used in the sense of hear me, listen to me and follow my suggestions as command. It means to comply, not just to let it go in one ear and out the other. “Do you hear me!” has a subtle threat attached: “Or Else!” And you don’t want to find out what the “else” is. In the Christian life, we are to walk by faith or else we may encounter discipline to encourage us to return to walking by faith.

Herman has said this means the obedience that is faith. He stresses that because there are other views that stray from that. And those other views

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could easily lead to legalism. One commentator said that in any case, obedience and faith are tied together. I think Robby Dean agrees with Herman and has a detailed explanation. I include quotes from him.

From Robby Dean:

“The phrase here, “for the obedience of faith,” is understood different ways. The main noun is “obedience”, but that noun is qualified by another noun that in this case is in the genitive case. The genitive case usually indicates possession and translated by the English preposition “of”—“obedience of the faith.” But that phrase “of the faith” has many different shades of meaning. So there are some who say that it is “for obedience from faith,” genitive of source, that obedience comes from the source of your faith (and that is possible). Others say it is obedience belonging to faith, in terms of the genitive of possession; others that it is obedience in the sense of with reference to faith. So we want to see if we can narrow down our understanding of what Paul is talking about when he talks about the obedience of the faith.²”

Robby Dean jumps to Romans 16:26 which is the other place that Paul uses this phrase.

Obedience of Faith: Romans 1:5 → Romans 16:26

He reminds us that this introduction to Romans in chapter 1 is in some ways repeated in Chapters 15/16. For instance,

Romans 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, (i.e. in the Old Testament)

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the

² <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-005b/read>

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obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Romans 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

Romans 16:26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

Robby Dean calls it a bracket based upon military artillery terminology. Herman calls it a sandwich with the beginning and ending of Romans being the bread. Me? I am a book person so I call it book ends.

Robby Dean goes the other of Paul's usage of "obedience of the faith" to provide a clearer perspective on this phrase.

"So Paul concludes Romans in 16:26 by saying: "... Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, {leading} to obedience of faith." This means that obedience consists of faith, the obedience to believe and the obedience to grow is also produced by faith. Faith has to do with obedience. This is seen again in Romans 10:16-17 "However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." This is dealing with Old Testament

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passages and the failure of Israel to accept Jesus as Messiah. Paul quotes from an Old Testament passage and connects what was happening at that time with what had happened in the period 700–586 BC. In Isaiah 53:1 Isaiah says: “Who has believed our message (report)?” But it is the first sentence in Romans 10:16 that we focus on: “they did not all heed the good news (obeyed the gospel).” Believing the message is equivalent to obeying the gospel. The report is the message of the gospel. So faith is obedience, but it is not a meritorious obedience which is somehow the idea of working or doing something righteous that God somehow blesses us for; it is recognizing that the merit is all in Christ, not in me; God has commanded me to believe in Him but the value comes from the object of belief, not the act of belief.³”

As Robby Dean says, “Believing the message is equivalent to obeying the gospel.” Similarly, Herman says obedience that is faith.

In another lesson, Robby Dean reiterates the same concept in slightly different language.

“Obedience to the faith is a phrase that refers to obedience with relationship to faith, because believing in Christ as Savior is also a response to a command. It is obedience to that command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Faith is also a response to the various other mandates and prohibitions that we find in the Scriptures.⁴”

Each person has a spiritual gift. As Herman has said many times, our spiritual gifts are not for the individual but for the benefit of the church. A pastor-teacher’s gift is evident. But your spiritual gift may be a prayer warrior gift. Maybe no person will directly appreciate your gift. But you use it to build up the church. Jesus knows what you have done. He will reward you at the Judgment Seat of Christ for praying in faith.

3 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-005b/read>

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Robby Dean continues based upon the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28:

“Everybody plays a role on the team and the goal of the team is to make disciples of all the nations by baptizing and by teaching them to observe all things that we have been commanded. Even though that emphasis is on obedience, that doesn’t make this legalism. Legalism says obedience is the basis for God’s blessing; but what we are talking about is we walk by faith, and faith focuses on the promises and the mandates and the principles of Scripture. So faith looks at those promises, looks at those mandates, looks at those prohibitions and says I believe that is true so I am going to act this way, or I’m not going to act this way; I am going to think this way or I’m not going to think this way; and that is how we begin to implement all the principles of Scripture and begin to grow. And this exactly is what was happening in the church in Rome. It has been pointed out from one other passage in Romans 10:16, 17 where Paul says in reference to the gospel, that “they have not all obeyed the gospel.” So again obedience is linked with the gospel. There is clearly a recognition in Scripture that believing the gospel is a command to all human beings and those who obey the command believe—non-meritorious but it is faith based on hearing the Word of God.⁵”

Paul used this word for obedience seven times in this letter: Romans 1:5, 5:19, 6:16 (x2), 15:18, 16:19, 16:26. In Romans 5:19 Christ, Himself, is said to be obedient:

Romans 5:19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

5 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-006b/read>

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This reminds me of Jesus' motivation expressed in prayer in the Garden just prior to being betrayed by Judas:

Luke 22:41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Jesus' humility bowed to the Father's will. Jesus trusted the Father's plan.

Why have I stressed the point that obedience is faith? As Robby Dean pointed out and Herman Mattox repeatedly said, if misunderstood, obedience can lead to legalism and the legalistic list or the do and do life style. We walk by faith. But taken correctly, this leads to a faith walk toward God.

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Among all the Gentiles. Paul was specifically sent to the Gentiles to give them the gospel. But, he was not prevented from giving the gospel to the Jews. Indeed, his *modus operandi* was to go to the Jew first. But in a broader perspective, he was complying with Jesus' great commission:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

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Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

The word for gentiles in Romans 1:5 and the word for nations in Matthew 28:19 is the same word in the Greek, *ethnos*.

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”