

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Five Ways to Disobey God

By Bobby Witherington

“In your seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen. 22:18). “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: (27) the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; (28) and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known” (Deut. 11:26-28). “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered (9) And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

There are three biblical dispensations – the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Age, and the gospel Dispensation. The scriptures just cited relate to these biblical time periods – Genesis 22:18 pertains to the Patriarchal Age, Deuteronomy 11:16-28 relates to the Mosaic Age, and Hebrews 5:8-9 relate to the Gospel Dispensation. What is unique about each of these verses is the emphasis which is placed upon **obedience** to God, and the promised **blessings** upon the obedient. The plain fact is this: God has always demanded obedience on the part of His people, and He has always blessed the obedient.

Even a casual reading of the Bible should convince an honest person of the necessity of obeying God. However, the reverse of this fact is also clearly evident. Even as God has always blessed the obedient; He has always punished the disobedient! For example, we call to mind Genesis 2:17, wherein with reference to the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil,”* God told Adam regarding that tree that *“you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* We move forward one chapter and read of Adam and Eve eating of that tree, and then of the tragic consequences which followed. To the woman God said, *“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and He shall rule over you”* (Gen. 3:16). To Adam God said: *“Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return”* (Gen. 3:17-19). Then God sent them forth from the garden and placed *“cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life”* (Gen. 3:24). Thus, early on in the Patriarchal age, man learned (the hard way!) that there are sad consequences which follow in the wake of disobedience to God! But consider Numbers 20:8-11, wherein God told Moses to *“speak to the rock,”* and He told him that *“it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.”* Time-wise, this was after Moses had led the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt; they came to Kadesh where *“there was no water,”* and the people began to speak against Moses and his brother Aaron and make false accusations against them (Num. 20:1-5). To solve the water problem, God told Moses to *“speak to the rock,”* and He promised him that upon so doing *“it will yield its water”* (Num. 20:8). But Moses was angry, so instead of speaking to the rock, He *“lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank”* (Num. 20:11). Moses disobeyed God upon this occasion; God told him to *“speak to the rock,”* but Moses instead *“struck the rock.”* Speaking is not the same as striking! In consequence, God spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, *“Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them”* (Num. 20:12). Think of it! Moses had labored long, hard, and bravely in leading the Israelites from Egypt and toward the promised land, but Moses and his brother, Aaron, were not privileged to enter therein themselves! Why? Because of having **disobeyed** the Lord! Now let us move forward to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, verses written by Paul in this the gospel age. Herein he had this to say: *“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you. (7) and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. (8)*

in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:6-9). There is simply no way to exaggerate the punishment herein described! How do you exaggerate punishment involving “*flaming fire,*” “*vengeance,*” and “*everlasting destruction?*” And this is the punishment awaiting those who “*do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Clearly, God has never looked with favor upon disobedience! Truth be known, among those who profess to believe the Bible, most people will give lip service to the necessity of obeying God and even nod their heads in agreement when a person makes a general statement regarding the sad consequences of disobedience. However, generally speaking, most people do not stop and consider the fact that there are several ways to **disobey** God. Hence, herein we shall note:

Five Ways to Disobey God

1. By doing what God has expressly forbidden. This is the sin of Commission. And this is what Adam and Eve did; they ate of the tree of which God had forbidden them to eat. Eight of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:1-17) involved things concerning which God had said “*You shall not*” do. In fact, the Old Testament abounded in “*thou shalt not*s,” and sad consequences always came in the wake of man doing what God had expressly forbidden.

2. By refusing to do what God has commanded. This is the sin of Omission. Obedience to the gospel is something which God has commanded. Illustrating this point, we call to mind Acts 10:48 wherein Peter “*commanded*” Cornelius and his household “*to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*” Obedience to the gospel is not an option; it is a command! And we have already cited 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 which sets forth the sad consequences awaiting those “*who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

3. By Adding to the word of the Lord. This is the sin of Presumption. In both the Old and New Testaments God has clearly warned against humankind adding to His word (Cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19, etc.). Sadly, people often bring in their own human innovations, and then seek to justify such by saying, “where does the Bible expressly condemn,” and then they cite what they are trying to add. It might be instrumental music to the worship; it might be church support of human institutions and paying them to do the work God commanded the church to do; it might be any number of things. But the point is this: The Bible clearly commands us to “*Test all things; hold fast what is good*” (1 Thess. 5:17). The burden of proof is always upon the part of the person seeking to bring in his own innovation; it is more his duty to prove that such is right than it is someone else’s duty to prove that it is wrong! After all, regarding this point, Colossians 3:17 could not be plainer. Herein the inspired apostle wrote, saying, “*whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” To do something in His “*name*” is to do it by His authority, and to do something by His authority requires us to be able to give “book, chapter, and verse” for what we are doing. Otherwise, we become guilty of the sin of presumption.

4. By taking from the word of God. This is a sin of the same nature; it is the sin of presumption. The same verses which forbid us to **add to** God’s word also forbid us from **taking from** His word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). Yet this is a sin commonly committed. Many take the name of Christ from the church, others remove the regular first-day-of-the-week observance of the Lord’s supper; many remove regular worship from their lives and even godly living, etc.

5. By substituting for what God has commanded. This is the sin of Disrespect. Cain’s offering of the fruit of the ground was a substitute for an animal sacrifice which God required (Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4). Nabab and Abihu offered “*strange fire*” unto the Lord and got burned up as a result (Lev. 10:1-3). Many today are still involved in making human substitutes for what God has required. Some bring in sprinkling and pouring instead of immersion; others follow human creeds instead of the Bible; others religiously wear man-originated party names instead of the name “*Christian;*” others join human denominations instead of becoming members of the church Jesus built; many substitute choirs in the place of congregational singing, etc.

Conclusion: It is obvious that there are many ways to disobey God, and there is no way to please God by disobeying Him! Let us take heed and act accordingly. ■