

Speak to the rock to pour out water

Numbers 20:10

And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

Numbers 20:12

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

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Forward

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE is STILL DISOBEDIENCE.

"Often we try to offer God partial obedience. We want to pick and choose the commands we obey. We sometimes make a list of the commands we like and obey those while ignoring the ones we think are unreasonable, difficult.

When God told Moses to speak to the rock and he had previously been told. Here is an example of partial obedience.

Throughout this study we will view Scriptures concerning partial obedience, disobedience and obedience.

God is seeking those who walk in full obedience to his word.

Chapter 1

Moses partially obeys God's command.

Numbers 20:8-12

"You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, command the rock over there to pour out its water. You will get enough water from the rock to satisfy all the people and their livestock."

So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the Lord. Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?"

Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank their fill.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!"

After 37 years in the wilderness, the Israelites forgot that their wanderings were a result of their parents' and their own sin. They could not accept the fact that they brought their problems upon themselves, so

they blamed Moses for their condition. Often our troubles result from our own disobedience or lack of faith.

We cannot blame God for our sins. Until we face this reality, we will have little peace and no spiritual growth.

The Lord had told Moses to speak to the rock; however, Moses struck it, not once, but twice.

God did the miracle; yet Moses was taking credit for it when he said, "Must we bring you water from this rock?"

For this he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. Was God's punishment of Moses too harsh? After all, the people had nagged him, slandered him, and rebelled against both him and God. Now they were at it again.

But Moses was the leader and model for the entire nation. Because of this great responsibility to the people, he could not be let off lightly. By striking the rock, Moses disobeyed God's direct command and dishonored God in the presence of his people.

Moses was practicing partial obedience. Partial obedience is disobedience.

Chapter 2

Abraham partially obeyed.

Genesis 12:1-4

Then the Lord told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

God told Abram to leave his father's house, which meant that his father was still alive. Abram decided to get out of his country, but he went to Harran. He was still with his kindred, and he was still in his father's house. Partial obedience is disobedience.

When Abram's father died, Abram left (at age seventy-five) and took Lot with him. Abram did not have to wait till he was a hundred years old to have his son, Isaac.

How many years of suffering did he go through wanting a son? Abram delayed his blessing by delaying his obedience.

If God has given you direction, don't wait until you can reconcile His direction with your own understanding. Just go ahead, step out, and obey God.

Jonah partially obeyed.

Jonah 1:1-3

The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai:

"Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh! Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction in order to get away from the Lord. He went down to the seacoast, to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish.

He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping that by going away to the west he could escape from the Lord.

Jonah is mentioned in 2Ki 14:25. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, the king of Israel from 793 to 753 B.C. He may have been a member of the company of prophets mentioned in connection with Elisha's ministry (2Ki 2:3).

God told Jonah to preach to Nineveh, the most important city in Assyria, the rising world power of Jonah's day. Within 50 years, Nineveh would become the capital of the vast Assyrian Empire. Jonah doesn't say much about Nineveh's wickedness, but the prophet Nahum gives us more insight.

Nahum says that Nineveh was guilty of

- (1) Evil plots against God (Na 1:9);
- (2) Exploitation of the helpless (Na 2:12);
- (3) Cruelty in war (Na 2:12, 13); and
- (4) Idolatry, prostitution, and witchcraft (Na 3:4).

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, about 500 miles northeast of Israel, to warn of judgment and to declare that the people could receive mercy and forgiveness if they repented.

Nineveh was a powerful and wicked city. Jonah had grown up hating the Assyrians and fearing their atrocities. His hatred was so strong that he didn't want them to receive God's mercy. Jonah was actually afraid the people would repent (4:2, 3). Jonah's attitude is representative of Israel's reluctance to share God's love and mercy with others, even though this was their God-given mission (Ge 12:3). They, like Jonah, did not want non-Jews (Gentiles) to obtain God's favor.

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"Often we try to offer God partial obedience. We want to pick and choose the commands we obey. We make a list of the commands we like and obey those while ignoring the ones we think are unreasonable, difficult,

Chapter 3

King Saul was not loyal to God's command.

1 Samuel 15:11-23

"I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has again refused to obey me."

Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the Lord all night.

Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, "Saul went to Carmel to set up a monument to himself; then he went on to Gilgal."

When Samuel finally found him, Saul greeted him cheerfully. "May the Lord bless you," he said. "I have carried out the Lord's command!"

"Then what is all the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle I hear?" Samuel demanded.

"It's true that the army spared the best of the sheep and cattle," Saul admitted. "But they are going to sacrifice them to the Lord your God. We have destroyed everything else."

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! Listen to what the Lord told me last night!"

"What was it?" Saul asked.

And Samuel told him, "Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The Lord has anointed you king of Israel.

And the Lord sent you on a mission and told you, 'Go and completely destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, until they are all dead.'

Why haven't you obeyed the Lord? Why did you rush for the plunder and do exactly what the Lord said not to do?"

"But I did obey the Lord," Saul insisted. "I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else.

Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep and cattle and plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."

But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams.

Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you from being king."

Repentance in God is not a change of mind, as it is in us, but a change of method. The change was in Saul; "He is turned back from following me." Hereby he made God his enemy.

Samuel spent a whole night in pleading for Saul. The rejection of sinners is the grief of believers: God delights not in their death, nor should we.

Saul boasts to Samuel of his obedience. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord.

The noise the cattle made, like the rust of the silver, Jas 5:3, witnessed against him. Many boast of obedience to the command of God; but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their angry and unkind spirit, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them?

See of what evil covetousness is the root; and see what the sinfulness of sin is, and notice that in it which above anything else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord; it is disobedience: "Thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord." Carnal, deceitful hearts, like Saul, think to excuse themselves from God's commandments by what pleases themselves. It is hard to convince the children of disobedience.

But humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burnt-offering and sacrifices.

God is more glorified and self-more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burned upon the altar, than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and to make our will subject to his will. Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

Chapter 4

The wife of Adam is an example of disobedience

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Observe the steps of the transgression: not steps upward, but downward toward the pit.

1. She saw. A great deal of sin comes in at the eye. Let us not look on that which we are in danger of lusting after, Mat 5:28.

2. She took. It was her own act and deed. Satan may tempt, but he cannot force; may persuade us to cast ourselves down, but he cannot cast us down, Mat 4:6.

3. She did eat. When she looked perhaps she did not intend to take; or when she took, not to eat: but it ended in that. It is wisdom to stop the first motions of sin, and to leave it off before it be meddled with.

4. She gave it also to her husband with her. Those that have done ill, are willing to draw in others to do the same.

5. He did eat. In neglecting the tree of life, of which he was allowed to eat, and eating of the tree of knowledge, which was forbidden, Adam

plainly showed a contempt of what God had bestowed on him, and a desire for what God did not see fit to give him.

He would have what he pleased, and do what he pleased. His sin was, in one word, disobedience, Rom 5:19; disobedience to a plain, easy, and express command.

He had no corrupt nature within, to betray him; but had a freedom of will, in full strength, not weakened or impaired. He turned aside quickly. He drew all his posterity into sin and ruin.

Who then can say that Adam's sin had but little harm in it? When too late, Adam and the woman saw the folly of eating forbidden fruit.

They saw the happiness they fell from, and the misery they were fallen into. They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited. See her what dishonour and trouble sin is; it makes mischief wherever it gets in, and destroys all comfort.

Sooner or later it will bring shame; either the shame of true repentance, which ends in glory, or that shame and everlasting contempt, to which the wicked shall rise at the great day.

See here what the folly of those that have sinned is commonly. They have more care to save their credit before men, than to obtain their pardon from God.

The excuses men make to cover and lessen their sins, are vain and frivolous; like the aprons of fig-leaves, they make the matter never the better: yet we are all apt to cover our transgressions as Adam.

Before they sinned, they would have welcomed God's gracious visits with humble joy; but now he was become a terror to them. No marvel that they became a terror to themselves, and full of confusion.

This shows the falsehood of the tempter, and the frauds of his temptations. Satan promised they should be safe, but they cannot so much as think themselves so! Adam and Eve were now miserable comforters to each other!

Pharaoh chose to disobey.

Exodus 5:2

But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

God will own his people, though poor and despised, and will find a time to plead their cause. Pharaoh treated all he had heard with contempt. He had no knowledge of Jehovah, no fear of him, no love to him, and therefore refused to obey him. Thus Pharaoh's pride, ambition, covetousness, and political knowledge, hardened him to his own destruction.

What Moses and Aaron ask is very reasonable, only to go three days' journey into the desert, and that on a good errand. We will sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Pharaoh was very unreasonable, in saying that the people were idle, and therefore talked of going to sacrifice. He thus misrepresents them that he might have a pretence to add to their burdens.

Chapter 5

The sons of Aaron offered strange fire.

Leviticus 10:1

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

Next to Moses and Aaron, none were more likely to be honourable in Israel than Nadab and Abihu. There is reason to think that they were puffed up with pride, and that they were heated with wine.

While the people were prostrate before the Lord, adoring his presence and glory, they rushed into the tabernacle to burn incense, though not at the appointed time; both together, instead of one alone, and with fire not taken from the altar.

If it had been done through ignorance, they had been allowed to bring a sin-offering. But the soul that doeth presumptuously, and in contempt of God's majesty and justice, that soul shall be cut off. The wages of sin is death. They died in the very act of their sin.

The sin and punishment of these priests showed the imperfection of that priesthood from the very beginning, and that it could not shelter any from the fire of God's wrath, otherwise than as it was typical of Christ's priesthood.

Moses was to speak to the rock.

Numbers 20:8

"Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink."

After thirty-eight years' tedious abode in the wilderness, the armies of Israel advanced towards Canaan again. There was no water for the congregation. We live in a wanting world, and wherever we are, must expect to meet with something to put us out. It is a great mercy to have plenty of water, a mercy which, if we found the want of, we should more own the worth of.

Hereupon they murmured against Moses and Aaron. They spake the same absurd and brutish language their fathers had done. It made their crime the worse, that they had smarted so long for the discontent and distrusts of their fathers, yet they venture in the same steps.

Moses must again, in God's name, command water out of a rock for them; God is as able as ever to supply his people with what is needful for them.

But Moses and Aaron acted wrong. They took much of the glory of this work of wonder to themselves; "Must we fetch water?" As if it were done by some power or worthiness of their own.

They were to speak to the rock, but they smote it. Therefore it is charged upon them, that they did not sanctify God, that is, they did not give to him alone that glory of this miracle which was due unto his name. And being provoked by the people, Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips.

The same pride of man would still usurp the office of the appointed Mediator; and become to ourselves wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Such a state of sinful independence, such a rebellion of the soul against its Saviour, the voice of God condemns in every page of the gospel

Saul is punished for consulting a witch.

1 Samuel 28:18

"As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

. Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience. In his distress, Saul inquired of the Lord. He did not seek in faith, but with a double, unstable mind. Saul had put the law in force against those that had familiar spirits, Ex 22:18.

Many seem zealous against, sin, when they are any way hurt by it, who have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves.

Saul will drive the devil out of his kingdom, yet harbours him in his heart by envy and malice. How foolish to consult those whom, according to God's law, he had endeavoured to root out!

Saul Consults a Witch at Endor

When we go from the plain path of duty, everything draws us further aside, and increases our perplexity and temptation. Saul desires the woman to bring one from the dead, with whom he wished to speak; this was expressly forbidden, Deut 18:11.

All real or pretended witchcraft or conjuration, is a malicious or an ignorant attempt to gain knowledge or help from some creature, when it cannot be had from the Lord in the path of duty.

While Samuel was living, we never read of Saul's going to advice with him in any difficulties; it had been well for him if he had. But now he is dead, "Bring me up Samuel."

Many who despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when living, would be glad to have them again, when they are gone. The whole shows that it was no human fraud or trick. Though the woman could not cause Samuel's being sent, yet Saul's inquiry might be the occasion of it.

The woman's surprise and terror proved that it was an unusual and unexpected appearance.

Saul had despised Samuel's solemn warnings in his lifetime, yet now that he hoped, as in defiance of God, to obtain some counsel and encouragement from him, might not God permit the soul of his departed prophet to appear to Saul, to confirm his former sentence, and denounce his doom?

The expression, "Thou and thy sons shall be with me," means no more than that they shall be in the eternal world. There appears much solemnity in God's permitting the soul of a departed prophet to come as a witness from heaven, to confirm the word he had spoken on earth.

Chapter 6

A prophet is punished for disobedience.

1 Kings 13:20-23

And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee,

But comest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of which the Lord did say to thee, eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulcher of thy fathers.

And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

The judgments of God are beyond our power to fathom; and there is a judgment to come. Nothing can excuse any act of willful disobedience. This shows what they must expect who hearken to the great deceiver. They that yield to him as a tempter, will be terrified by him as a tormentor. Those whom he now fawns upon, he will afterwards fly upon; and whom he draws into sin, he will try to drive to despair.

Israel was taken captive because of disobedience.

2 Kings 18:9-12

And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

The descent Sennacherib made upon Judah, was a great calamity to that kingdom, by which God would try the faith of Hezekiah, and chastise the people. The secret dislike, the hypocrisy, and luke warmness of numbers, require correction; such trials purify the faith and hope of the upright, and bring them to simple dependence on God.

Chapter 7

Obedience to God

Exodus 19:5

'Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine;

Moses was called up the mountain, and was employed as the messenger of this covenant. The Maker and first Mover of the covenant, is God himself. This blessed charter was granted out of God's own free grace. The covenant here mentioned was the national covenant, by which the Israelites were a people under the government of Jehovah. It was a type of the new covenant made with true believers in Christ Jesus; but, like other types, it was only a shadow of good things to come.

Obey my voice and I will be your God.

Jeremiah 7:23

"But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'

God shows that obedience was required of them. That which God commanded was, Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God. The promise is very encouraging. Let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your happiness.

Do not be rebellious toward God.

Exodus 23:21

"Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him.

It is here promised that they should be guided and kept in their way through the wilderness to the land of promise, Behold, I send an angel before thee, mine angel. The precept joined with this promise is, that they be obedient to this angel whom God would send before them.

Every thought is to be captive to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

But observe the conquest the word of God gains. The appointed means, however feeble they appear to some, will be mighty through God. And the preaching of the cross, by men of faith and prayer, has always been fatal to idolatry, impiety, and wickedness.

Follow obedience for the Lord's name sake.

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,

The Christian profession does not consist in a notional knowledge or a bare assent, much less in perverse disputings, but in obedience. And all those, and those only, are brought to obedience of the faith, who are effectually called of Jesus Christ.

Obedient children are not to be conformed to the former lusts.

Romans 6:17

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance.

The apostle rejoiced now they obeyed from the heart the gospel, into which they were delivered as into a mould. As the same metal becomes a new vessel, when melted and recast in another mould, so the believer has become a new creature

Obedient are to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

1 Peter 1:2

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

This epistle is addressed to believers in general, who are strangers in every city or country where they live, and are scattered through the nations.

Obey the Lord that you may live.

Jeremiah 38:20

But Jeremiah said, "They will not give you over. Please obey the LORD in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live.

Jeremiah was not forward to repeat the warnings, which seemed only to endanger his own life, and to add to the king's guilt, but asked whether he feared to do the will of God. The less men fear God, the more they fear men; often they dare not act according to their own judgments and consciences.

Listen to the commandments and obey.

Deuteronomy 11:13

"It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul.

God will bless them with an abundance of all good things, if they would love him and serve him. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is; but the favour of God shall put gladness into the heart, more than the increase of corn, and wine, and oil.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I
accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

Reference:

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.