

# Ephesians

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] If you will consult your scripture sheet, we have just barely gotten into Ephesians chapter 2. And in it we learn about the Gentiles who formerly were alienated from God in every way.

And Paul is reminding them of who and what they were before Christ came into their life. And he begins in verse 1 of chapter 2 saying, And you hath he quickened or made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins.

This, of course, is spiritual death. They were alive toward each other, but they were dead toward God. And it is the regenerating act of the Spirit of God that quickens our spirit.

Let me remind you again that we are all comprised of materiality and immateriality. The materiality has to do with our physical body, with which we are all familiar.

The immateriality has to do with the spirit being of our person that is not physical, but it is very real.

[ 1 : 12 ] And it is that part of your being that God made alive when you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. You were quickened in your spirit, made alive in your spirit.

And it is that same spirit that exits the body and is present with the Lord at the point of physical death. So he is talking about being a new creation in Christ.

And he says, Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world. Of course, that was the only way they could walk. If you are an unbeliever, you don't have the option of walking any other way other than the way the world walks.

You are in step with the world, and very comfortably usually in that scenario. It is according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.

This too is an immaterial being. Satan is a spirit being as well as all the angels who do his bidding.

[ 2 : 20 ] The fallen angels, that is. They are classified as demons today. They are spirit beings. That means you cannot see them, you cannot feel them, but they have objective reality nonetheless.

And these march to the tune of the master, and that is his infernal majesty, Satan, described as Lucifer, who was one of the most outstanding angelic creations of God.

And then he rebelled against the creator. And he did so because God gave to Lucifer, as well as to all of the angels, as well as to all human beings, he gave to them an element called a volition, a will.

And that gave them the capacity to obey or disobey. And we are reminded in 2 Corinthians 4 that Satan is the god of this world, or of this age.

And he is the one who blinds the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them. So people are morally, spiritually blinded.

[ 3 : 38 ] And that is added to the original condition in which they were born, which is one of fallenness. And it is correct to say that humanity has two strikes against them.

One is our own moral fallenness, and the other is the satanic blindness that adds to that. There isn't anything that can overcome those two strikes but an injection of the gospel, which is the power of God.

It's the only thing that is able to counteract that, those negative elements of being born in sin and blinded to it. Those two strikes against us, only the gospel can overcome that.

And Paul reminds us that it is this spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

He's not talking about underage people here. He's talking about humanity. And we are described in many respects as children, regardless of how old we are.

[ 4 : 41 ] We are children in so far as the Creator is concerned. And there is this spirit, this nefarious spirit, that is now working in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation or our manner of life in times past and the lusts were flesh.

In other words, everybody used to be a child of disobedience. It doesn't make any difference how you were born or when you were born or where you were born. You were a child of disobedience.

And that is simply because we are, as we are born, we are on the other side. We belong to this fallen world as fallen creatures.

And when Paul uses this term of disobedience, I must confess that it is one that never struck me in the particular vein that it is, and that we are going to discuss this morning because I always tended to think of when someone was presented with the gospel, they had an option of either believing or not believing.

And that's true. You do. But I guess I never really thought of it in terms of not believing as being an act of disobedience.

[ 6 : 04 ] But it is. And the scriptures really have a lot to say about that, but we're going to have to depart just a little bit from Ephesians 2 and pick up on some of these other references because the Bible is its own best explanation.

And we get a fuller picture when we compare scripture with scripture. So we're going to look at this term obedience and disobedience, and maybe we'll see it in a new light. At least I have, as I've come to appreciate this, and it's going to require you getting off your scripture sheet and going to the Bible, and let's go first of all to Romans chapter 1.

We're going to see how this phrase, obedience and disobedience, plays out in a number of places. And I never saw it in this light before. I was engaged in a more thorough study of the subject.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul is explaining his apostleship and the calling that has been given to him by God.

And he says in verse, well, let's just start with verse 3. He's talking about this gospel concerning his son, born of the descendant of David, according to the flesh, declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about, that is, for the express purpose.

[ 7 : 36 ] In other words, Paul is saying, this is the real reason why I was saved, why I was converted on the road to Damascus. It was in connection with this special commission that God was giving to me to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake.

So, that puts the Gentiles in the posture, in the sphere of disobedience, before the apostle Paul comes along and proclaims this gospel to them, giving them then a new option of remaining in and maintaining their disobedience or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, which is actually an act of obedience.

Now, I always previously tended to think of it as being an act of our volition or an act of our will. And it is. It is. But I guess I never really thought of it in terms of obedience or disobedience.

It never really struck me before, but any time someone hears the gospel and rejects it, they are simply exercising disobedience as an act of their will.

It is coupled with defiance and disobedience. This, fellas, this is the rebel heart that we're talking about that works in every human being.

[ 9 : 24 ] And Paul is classifying this as an act of obedience or disobedience. And he's saying this is the very reason that he was raised up. And there are some other references here, too.

If you look at Romans 2. Romans 2 and verse 4.

Romans 3.

The righteous judgment of God. And here he is just elaborating a little bit on this concept of disobedience. And let's check out another one.

Romans 5 and verse 19. Romans 5 and verse 19. For as through the one man's disobedience.

[ 10 : 47 ] And the context here assigns that. It was through Adam. It was through Adam's disobedience. The many were made sinners. Even so, through the obedience of the one.

And that's our Lord Jesus Christ. The many will be made righteous. And here we've got obedience, disobedience. The disobedience began with Adam. The disobedience began with Adam. The obedience that corrected that was in the person of Christ.

This is what Jesus meant when he says, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. I do always those things that pleased my Father.

And all that is, is an expression of disobedience. And when Christ was confronted with the necessity of going to that cross.

And he prayed in the garden the night before. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. He was beseeching his Father for an optional plan.

[ 11 : 59 ] To accomplish the same goal of being able to redeem humanity. But there was no optional plan. And that's why Christ qualified that by saying, Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

And here, Christ is extending his obedience even to the death of the cross. Because obedience and disobedience, that's the issue.

It's disobedience that got humanity in the problem that it is. And it's disobedience that keeps them there. In Romans 6 and verse 17, if I can read my own writing here.

But thanks be to God that though you were, and here he's writing to the saints at Rome, though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart.

To that form of teaching to which you were committed. Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. This again is another expression of obedience.

[ 13 : 17 ] When these Romans heard the gospel, when it was communicated to them. This gospel that is the power of God through faith unto salvation. And they responded in a positive way.

They moved from the sphere of spiritual, moral disobedience into that of obedience. Just compliance.

Just compliance. Agreeing with God. That's exactly what happens when someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ. They align themselves with the will and the purpose of God coming into obedience.

And then in Romans chapter 10 and verses 8 and 9. We're all familiar with this.

Confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord. Believe in your heart. God has raised Him from the dead. You shall be saved. For with the heart, man believes. That is, with the core of his being, as opposed to just mental assent.

- [ 14 : 25 ] But with the core of your being, with the totality of your person, that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart, man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth, he confesses, resulting in salvation.

For the Scripture says, whoever believes in Him, will not be disappointed. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.

For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?

How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.

However, they did not all heed the glad tidings. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?

- [ 15 : 38 ] Wow. Look at the last verse. Same chapter. But as for Israel, he says, all the day long, I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.

This was the burden that was on Paul's heart. It was on the burden that was on every apostle's heart. It was on the heart of every prophet. When you preach the message that is designed to provide salvation and deliverance, and the message is soundly rejected.

That's a depressing thing. And any preacher or prophet who is worth his salt, who is not agonizing and depressed over people's unbelief, isn't much of a preacher.

Because we understand that the message we have to give is a life-giving message. And it ought to break our heart for people to say, thanks, but no thanks.

It's not for me. Well, it is for them. It is for everybody. This gospel is the power of God through faith unto salvation.

- [ 16 : 59 ] This gospel is God's antidote. It's God's only antidote to man's sin and ultimate destruction.

And we have an obligation. Paul said, I'm a debtor. I owe this to people to proclaim it. And you are giving people a precious, priceless gift.

Only to have some of them say, I don't want it. Keep your gift. It's not for me. This is the act of disobedience.

This is rejection of that which Jesus Christ went to the cross to provide. That is a pretty powerful thing.

Joe? Okay. This disobedience. If you're disobedient then, that means you were at one time obedient, and you were supposed to be obedient.

- [ 18 : 03 ] It's the opposite of disobedience. It's being obedient. So, you were meant to be that way. We were meant to be obedient to God, to follow and do the righteousness of Him. And of course, Adam broke that.

Adam ruined that. But the whole plan was that you be obedient. Just like a parent has a child, and he's obedient, great. He says, well, now you're disobedient. What's he disobedient from? Well, he's disobedient from the standard that I set for my son to behave and how he's to act.

So, there was a plan there for everybody to be obedient. Right. But, it is obedience with the will. And this is what makes it a sticky thing.

It is obedience with the volition. It is a willing obedience. And probably the most pronounced consequence of the fall.

And I hope you remember this forever, because it's a very insightful thing. The most profound consequence as a result of the fall is the self-centeredness that is injected in each of us by sin.

[ 19 : 16 ] That's what it really is. And what that amounts to is, I want to be obedient to me. I want to do what I want to do.

It produces the rebel heart. It is a rejection of God's will in favor of our own will. As we pointed out to you before, when Adam and Eve were created and they enjoyed the fellowship with God in the garden, God was their focus.

He was their center. He was their everything. And when they rejected His authority and His word, went with the lie, their focus changed from God to themselves.

And now we are self-centered and self-seeking and self-serving. And that's part of our fallenness. That's the flesh. Larry?

That brings in mind the parable that Christ told about the two sons. One that the father asked them to go out and do something. Yeah. One said, oh yeah, I'll do that.

[ 20 : 29 ] The other one said, Yeah. Yeah. Good point. I appreciate that. Perfect, perfect illustration of these two sons. The father told the sons, the father told son A, go work in my field today.

And the son says, nothing doing, pops. I'm not going there. That's disobedience. That's rebelling. Second son, he says, go and work in my field today.

And he says, sure thing, dad, I'll get right on it. But he never went. And the first son rejected at first, but he came to a position of obedience.

And he repented. And he complied. And he was obedient. And the one who said, I'll do it, didn't do it. He was the one who was really disobedient.

So you want, the moral of the story is, there is always room and opportunity for repentance. God loves nothing more than a change of mind to bring ourselves from our will to his will.

[ 21 : 34 ] He delights in that. That repentance is God's silver bullet. He is ever the God of the second chance. But it is dependent on repentance, the change of mind.

And we change our mind with our will. And that usually is brought about by some conviction. Because just like a child that is disobedient to a parent may be beset with conviction and remorse and regret and feeling bad over having done it.

And they reverse themselves and they come into compliance. That's exactly what we do with God. We come from disobedience to obedience. And it is based on conviction.

And what is it that is designed to produce conviction and guilt? It is the gospel. gospel. When the gospel is preached, it gives people information.

Information that they need to act on. And when you act on it, you respond to it in a positive way. You change your mind from what your position was previously to what this new information called the gospel requires.

[ 22 : 45 ] And that is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is a beautiful thing. It is something that happens every time someone comes to faith. Now we saw how Paul closed out or how he opened Romans with that.

And I want you to see how he closes it with it. It's in chapter 15. Romans chapter 15. And look at verse 15. I'd like to get all of this in in just one setting if we can.

Paul says in verse 15, But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in Christ Jesus, I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

This was Paul's drumbeat. This is what he was all about. You preach this gospel, this good news of the grace of God, to people who've never heard it before, these Gentiles, they are non-Jews, they are non-Jews, and that provides them with the opportunity, the rationale, to reverse themselves and to believe the gospel.

[ 24 : 27 ] And when they do that, they are moving from a sphere of disobedience and rejection by God to one of obedience and acceptance by God.

And we're not finished yet, because in chapter 16, chapter 16 beginning with verse 19, he's closing out this epistle to the Romans.

Paul says to the Romans, for the report of your obedience has reached to all. In other words, everybody all over the Mediterranean world is hearing about the obedience of faith that the people in Rome have come to.

And it's a cause for rejoicing. Therefore, I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen, I, Tertius, who write this letter, Tertius was the amanuensis or the secretary, greet you in the Lord.

[ 25 : 45 ] Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you. Quartus, my brother, grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now, look at how he closes.

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 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 the obedience of faith.

That's the end result of the gospel and it is a beautiful thing. A couple more references before we conclude and the first is in 2 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 powerful passage.

Paul says beginning with verse 7 and to give relief to you you Thessalonians who are afflicted these people were undergoing great persecution and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Believing or disbelieving the gospel is not a valid option. The only one that matters is believing the gospel for those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

[ 27 : 55 ] There are people there are multitudes of people right here in our area who've heard the gospel and for whatever reason and there may be multiple reasons or excuses they give for rejecting it.

This is what awaits them and it's a pretty serious thing to consider. In fact it is the most serious of all. And the last one is in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 17 Peter says for it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God and if it begins with us first what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God the good news of God.

that is just sounds almost like an oxymoron doesn't it? To not obey the good news why would anyone not comply with the good news?

You can understand I'm not complying with bad news but good news that good news is served up it demands immediate acceptance just because it's good news.

but no there is something that is lurking within the heart and mind of fallen humans that says I don't want any news that is going to impede my own desires and my own will and this is precisely why people reject the gospel and you know something look back on your own experience most people reject the gospel before they ever accept it sometimes they reject it multiple times and sometimes they reject it for years before they accept it but the invitation remains open and the possibility of moving from disobedience to obedience is there with the hearing of the gospel so maybe maybe it's an option in the sense that when you give somebody the gospel and they say well you know

[ 30 : 24 ] I'm glad for you that you found something that suits you that's nice but it's not for me maybe you need to take the opportunity to say I trust you realize that you are flatly disobeying the God who has made you because most people will not think of it in those terms they just think of it in terms of hey I'm kind of neutral you know I'm not really for this or against it I'm just kind of no no those who haven't accepted have rejected because not accepting is an act of rejection and Jesus said he's not with me is against me and that's the way it plays out so I wonder if people to whom we give the gospel and they reject it I wonder if they really know that they are actually engaging in an act of disobedience you ought to tell them you ought to tell them what good will that do it will just be one more item in their heart and mind that may produce conviction they need to know that we have an obligation to tell them

I must confess I never really thought of it in these terms before but it's very valid it's very important people need to know they are being disobedient they don't know that they think hey I pay my bills I don't kick the dog I treat my wife okay and I pay my taxes and blah blah blah and yeah but the disobedience is in the area and toward the one who matters the most and they need to know that and we ought to have the moxie to tell them if we really care about them comments questions anyone Joe you know a lot of people accept the Lord towards their end of life you know a lot of people accept the Lord then and that's because they realize that I am not going to have control I'm not going to be able to just have my way anymore for very long so I might as well let the Lord have his way for the last few days of God or something is there something to that maybe well yeah that comes into play and you know the self centeredness thing that affects all of us it is it is a problem of autonomy we want to maintain our autonomy we want to be in charge now the truth of the matter is you're not in charge anyway you just think you are there are certain decisions that you can make but in one of the

Christianity clarified I don't remember which one it is we dealt with this on a number of segments and we simply attempted to debunk the idea that people think they're in charge they're running their own life and I just ask a few penetrating questions tell me were you in charge when you were involved in that automobile accident at 5th and Maine that almost killed you were you in charge then no not really were you in charge the day you got fired well no no not really you weren't you weren't in charge were you in charge the time that you were jilted as a lover well no you see fellas autonomy personal autonomy and being in charge is really in many respects a mere illusion we're just not in control of the things that we'd like to think Jake were you in charge when you were given the verdict about the brain problem and what you were going to have to undergo you were totally out of charge absolutely no control at all and in so many ways where we think we're calling the shots it's just an illusion we are not really in charge at all yeah an example of being in charge or not being in charge with the space program when they brought the mercury capsule into the atmosphere they turned it around backwards so the heat shield would protect itself well who do they have in that capsule they got test pilots test pilots a lot of things well if you find something backwards all your instincts are backwards they're all wrong they're going to be just the opposite so the controls people the trick was to let the test pilots think they were in control even though they weren't they turned that capsule around backwards and it was all on automation at that point but they thought they were in control yeah well we do like to think so because you know what if you're in control then you're in a position to take the credit if you get the outcome the outcome is right of course if the outcome isn't right then we look for somebody else to blame because it's not our fault right even though you were in control but no you weren't in control you see what

I'm saying it's a really it's a very insidious thing Frank I think if you're witnessing to someone who was not raised in a Christian family that knows absolutely nothing what you're talking about you're talking about someone who died for them and loved them and to me I think you can have more of an impact on that person by telling them that Jesus loved him rather than say God says you're disobedient well they need both they need both because both are true and it is an awareness of disobedience that can impact the guilt and after all what is it that causes someone to come from unbelief to believe it is guilt in connection with what guilt in connection with our sin and apart from sin we don't need a savior so the whole thing of guilt is designed to produce conviction and it is coupled with it is coupled with love in fact that is the supreme dynamic of the gospel it is that while we were yet sinners

Christ died for us that's incredible and then the passage goes on in Romans 5 and talks about nobody dies for their enemies someone may be willing to die for a friend but you don't die for your enemies and yet that's exactly what Jesus Christ did he died for his enemies how can you reject that and if you do that is an act of disobedience as well as an act of incredible ingratitude and people need to know that exactly why he loves us and he wants us to stop being disobedient because that's bad for you just like a kid who walks the street and you shouldn't be on the street a father punishes him and tells him you can't do that because I love you I don't want you to die absolutely and the principle is the same we want our children's obedience because we love them and we know what's best for them even though even though a three year old thinks he knows what's best you know than his parent and that too is that principle of that self-centeredness that is even in that little tyke

[ 38 : 27 ] God knows what's best for us absolutely he does and can we believe him can he be trusted we believe he can be he needs to be and we're disobedient if we don't do unbelievable to hear he can't