

**Your Words**  
**Obedience: Helps and Hindrances**  
**Lesson 2 Psalm 119:57-64**  
**072025**

**Introduction**

- 1 Over the last couple weeks we have highlighted two of our five Core Values, Core Value #1 – High View of Scripture and Core Value #2 Spirit Filled Worship.
  - a We are endeavoring to cultivate a high regard for the Word of God and are committed to correctly interpreting and teaching Scripture *AND*
  - b We are endeavoring to encourage a high sensitivity & dependency upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us *and among us as we worship the Lord.*
- 2 And that's why a three weeks ago we turned to Psalm 95 and talked about honoring God and preferring one another during the worship portion of the service.
  - a Since we believe God is present in worship and that we are speaking to God in worship and that it is possible to experience a transformational moment in worship we should do everything within our power to not interrupt that.
  - b And that the best way we could do that is to be on time or chose a seat where you would minimize interruptions. And I appreciate those of you who have caught that vision and are doing your best to be on time.
- 3 Then last week we turned to Psalm 119 and begin looking at the importance of God's Word in our lives and concluded with a couple of practical applications in regards to how we live out this value in our gatherings.
  - a First I officially announced we will continue to use the NIV in all our public teaching and preaching.
    - It's easier to understand without sacrificing accuracy.
    - It's accessible for those whose first language is not English.
    - It balances readability with faithfulness to the original texts.
  - b Secondly, I encouraged everyone to bring their NIV Bible with them by sharing the advantages of using a print Bible over a digital Bible or Bible app.

- Fewer distractions: A physical doesn't send you notifications that interrupt you or break your focus.
  - Stronger retention: A physical Bible helps you remember through spacial awareness. I can still see where Romans 8 was in my NKJV.
  - More context: A physical Bible makes it easier to see entire chapters or books and therefore follow narrative or the line of reasoning much better than a Bible app.
  - A sense of sacredness: A physical Bible helps distinguish Bible reading from other screen-based activities. Reading the Bible should be set apart from scrolling through your social media/news feed.
  - Deeper engagement: Notes, highlights, wear and tear on a print Bible reflect your spiritual journey and what the Lord has done in you.
- c And those advantages are so great we are going to change how we use video display technology when it comes to teaching the Bible on Sunday morning.
- In order to foster engagement with your own physical Bible beginning in August we are no longer going to be displaying the main sermon scripture on the screen. What began as a good thing has created a dependency that separates believers from the own Bible.
  - I hope that turning to a Scripture in your physical Bible on Sunday morning strengthens your resolve to open that same Bible on Monday morning and throughout the week.
  - If you forget your Bible or if someone is new and not in the habit of bringing a Bible, one will always be available in the chair racks on the main floor or chair pockets in the balcony. This will be our new practice beginning in August.

4 Again, our text this morning is Psalm 119:57-64. Page ?

**<sup>57</sup> You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to obey your words. <sup>58</sup> I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. <sup>59</sup> I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. <sup>60</sup> I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. <sup>61</sup> Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law. <sup>62</sup> At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. <sup>63</sup> I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. <sup>64</sup> The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees (Psalm 119:57–64).**

- 1 In this section of Psalm 119 the psalmist begins with the statement that God is his portion. And that phrase goes back into something that happened 40 years after the Israel's Exodus from Egypt.
  - a When the 12 tribes of Israel were finally about to enter the promised land God gave each them a portion of land; Reuben, Gad, Dan, Asher etc. all got a portion of land. (This was a big deal. It was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham 500 years earlier).
  - b But to the priestly tribe of Levi God said I am not going to give you any land, I'm going to give you something greater, I'm going to give you myself. I will be your "Portion."
  - c By the time the Psalms were being written the term "my Portion" referred to anyone who wanted God more than anything else.
    - "Yes your earthly blessings are good Lord, but what I want more than anything else is You.
    - Yes heaven will be glorious but it wouldn't be anything without You. You are my portion."
  - d This same heart attitude was put into words by the Psalmist Asaph, who in the 73<sup>rd</sup> psalm says, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:25-26*
    - You are my portion. You are my chief desire. You are my ultimate satisfaction.
    - Nothing else comes close. Like the old chorus says, You can have all this world, just give me Jesus.
- 3 Now when we believe the gospel and are born again the Holy Spirit dwells with in us. And among many other things He brings with him the desire for the Lord to be our portion. It's part of our new nature. We want God as our portion.
  - a Of course there are many things that can suppress that desire and even replace it. That's what happened to our first parents in the Garden.
    - Satan convinced them they needed something else to be their portion. He convinced them they didn't need God, they needed a special knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil.
    - It was all a lie but they were deceived by it and the rest is history. Today the deception is still prevalent and the temptation remains the same for us to pursue something other than God for our portion ... a God substitute instead of God himself.

- Sometimes that substitute is a destructive thing but most of the time it is a good thing we make into an ultimate thing, an idol. This is why at the end of his first letter John says, *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)*. Now he's not talking about little wooden statues, he's talking about anything that takes God's place in your heart.
- b So the question is how can we keep God as our portion? How can we avoid getting off track? How can we protect living in that sweet place of fellowship with God? The psalmist provides several answers to that question. We'll look at the first one this week ... Obeying his words.

**You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to obey your words. <sup>58</sup> I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise (Psalm 119:57-58).**

- 1 The Psalmist is saying "I consistently find my greatest satisfaction in the Lord. The Lord is my Portion. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm David said it like this: *The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.*
  - a In other words I am satisfied in you. I am not empty, I am full. I don't have to look to created things to satisfy.
  - b My portion/satisfaction is the Lord and that in turn gives me a resolve to obey your words. I have promised to obey your words. And as I do, you remain my Portion.
  - c If the Lord is your portion you will joyfully pursue obeying his words. Likewise, if you pursue obeying his words, the Lord will be your portion.
- 2 So joyful obedience is key. This morning I would like to offer up three helps and three hindrances when it comes to obeying God.

### **Three Helps for Obeying God**

- 1 **Obeying God requires your resolve.** If the Lord is to be your portion, if you are to escape the gravitational pull of making created things your portion ... you must make a decision to obey his words no matter what. I have resolved to obey God.
  - a This is what the Psalmist means when he says I have promised (past tense) to obey your words. The Hebrew word translated promise is *amar* (aw-mar) and is used with great latitude. Here it refers to a spoken resolve or determination to obey. The NKJV says, "I have said that I

would keep your words.” So there was a point in the past where the Psalmist said to God, “I resolve to obey Your words.”

- He did not wait until he faced temptation and had to make a choice. He made the choice first. I have resolved to obey.
- And then, on top of that, in verse 60 he says, *I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands*. I not only resolved to obey, but to obey without delay because delayed obedience is really disobedience.

b Now why make this promise or resolve? Why say, “I promise?” The answer is this: When the heart is determined to keep God’s words so much as to verbally make a promise before the courts of heaven it increases the determination to fight the temptations that will inevitably come to make something else your portion.

- It’s saying I am ready for that and I will not back down. I have promised to obey your words.
- It’s like a movie where a small band of warriors are facing a vastly superior army.

---They look at each other and one by one they verbally make their commitment to fight with all their heart, all the way to the end for God and king no matter what may become of them.

---Now why do they do that? Because when they verbally make that commitment it increases their resolve to not back down or retreat.

c That is what the Psalmist is doing. He’s putting himself out there. He’s making a vow. Ya, but what if I fail? That brings us to the second point

## 2 Obeying God requires God’s grace.

*You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to obey your words. <sup>58</sup> I have sought your face with all my heart; **be gracious to me according to your promise** (Psalm 119:57-58).*

a In other words, give to me through your Word (promise) the grace I need to obey. I have resolved to obey but my resolve is not enough. I need your gracious empowerment to obey. It’s not one or the other, it’s both.

b Paul says the same thing in Philippians chapter 2.

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to (obey) work out (live out) your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose (Philippians 2:12–13). (You work out because God works in you)*

d So, by making this promise the Psalmist resolved to obey. He was all in. I promise to obey your words. I am determined to obey. Now that determination is not so prevalent in the modern church.

- Today it is not uncommon for someone who has been a believer for some time to vocalize faith in the Lord, even love for the Lord and yet live in obvious disobedience without much thought about it. It is one reason that so many high profile Christians are falling to the wayside in sexual sin or doctrinal error.
- Now in some of those cases the person is isn't a true believer at all. They might have prayed a prayer but there never was a new birth. But in other cases they are true believers ... but not believers who are actively pursuing joyful obedience to God. They are hindered and there are several reasons for that which we will look at in a moment. But before we do one more thing about obeying God.

### **3 Obeying God flows from love for God**

- a When the Psalmist says You are my Portion, I have promised to obey your words he is not simply saying I will comply or I will fall in line with your words. No, he is saying I delight to obey your words.
- b This is not a guy who is reluctantly submitting. No, this is a guy who loves the Lord and delights in his Word and looking for way in which he can conform his behavior to the Lord in order to please the Lord.
- c The great Bible teacher Martin Lloyd Jones said it's like what happens when a guy and a gal first start falling in love.
  - They look forward to each time they get together with the person. And each time they make little mental notes of what the other person likes and dislikes all the while subconsciously conforming their behavior in order to please the one they love.
  - In an infinitely greater way that's what happens when we love the Lord. We embrace his likes and dislikes out of love. Obedience to God flows out of love. And the more that love grow the less autonomous and self-determining you want to be. Your heart is "Lord whatever you want."
  - The Apostle John said it like this:  
*This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).*

- d So, obedience requires our resolve, God's grace and it flows from love. Now let's look at three hinderances that can keep us from fully obeying and delighting in God like the Psalmist does.

### Three Hindrances to Obeying God

#### 1 A Worldly understanding of personal freedom.

- a Most people understand freedom in almost completely negative terms. They define freedom as freedom *from something*. We're free if we don't have any constraints, boundaries or restrictions on following the deepest desires of our hearts.
- b It is an illusion because nobody is truly free. Jesus taught that everyone is a slave to sin and the only true freedom is the freedom found through faith in Him. And faith in Jesus Christ always leads to obedience.
- True freedom is not doing what you want, it's wanting to do what God wants. Before you believe you can't do that.
  - True freedom is found in coming under God's authority and obeying God. And obeying his commands does not diminish our joy but rather increases and protects our joy. Earlier the Psalmist says, *I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts (Psalm 119:45).*
- c In others words, "Seeking out your precepts, obeying your words makes me free."
- I used to be a slave to fear because I couldn't control the future. I used to be a slave to resentment because there were certain things I didn't have that I thought I *had* to have. I used to be a slave to guilt because I could never live up to my expectations or the expectations of others." Fear, resentment, guilt, hopelessness used to be my Master.
  - Now that you're my Master, nothing else masters me. Now that I serve you, nothing else can control me. There were things I felt I had to have, now I can take them or leave them.
- d So, freedom is not a lack of boundaries. Freedom is finding the *right* boundaries, the ones that fit your design.
- A fish is free as long as it stays in the right environment, the water. Take it out and it flops around and eventually dies.
  - Our water is the words of the Lord. That is the environment in which we really experience freedom. That's where you really thrive.

- Outside of that environment of obedience to the Word of God we will always be flopping on the ground. We will always be like a “fish out of water.”

## 2 The **Impact of cultural relativism.**

- a Relativism is one of the core doctrines of our culture. It is the belief that there is no absolute standard of right and wrong for all people, in all places, under all circumstances for all time.
  - Instead each individual determines for themselves, based on various factors, what is right and wrong for them.
  - This belief includes the belief that its wrong to judge another’s persons standard of right and wrong. In other words, don’t tell me what’s right or wrong but I am telling you it’s wrong for you to judge my right and wrong. Oh, the hypocrisy in that.
- b Now some of this relativism has worked its way into the general Christian population and with it there has arisen a passivity concerning the biblical idea of obedience to God.
  - We have this idea that God needs to convince us or that we need to understand all the reasons why we need to do something God’s way instead of just simply obeying because he is God and we are not!
  - In some cases this passivity has even become an aversion to absolute right and wrong and a segue to redefining of God and creating another gospel.
- c But it was God’s absolute standard of right and wrong that made it necessary to send his Son to die on the cross.
  - We all have sinned and fell short of God’s standard of right and wrong (Rom 3:23) and the penalty for that was death (Rom 6:23).
  - So, God sent his Son to bear our death penalty and when we believe in him, we are forgiven for falling short of his absolute standard of right and wrong.
- d There is one standard of right and wrong and it comes from heaven. You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words. If you latch on to that it protects you from so much misery and futility and promotes so much joy and fruitfulness.

## 3 The third hindrance to obeying God has to do with an **Incomplete teaching of God’s grace** ... specifically when it comes to the relationship between God’s grace and obedience to God’s law.



- a Now when I say God's law, I mean God's moral law. I'm not talking about Jewish ceremonial law which was fulfilled by Christ but rather the timeless moral commandments of God.
- The moral right and wrong of God's law is still intact under the New Covenant in the New Testament
  - All of the ten commandments except the Sabbath commandment are repeated in the New Testament. God's moral law remains and is designed by God to protect our joy in Him.
- b But sometimes, in spite of that, if you uphold the virtue of obedience to God's moral law you can be perceived as being legalistic.
- If you lovingly and humbly call someone to obedience to God you may get the reply, "Look, man I'm not under the law, I'm under grace"
  - ... as if being under grace means that you are no longer under the obligation to obey God's moral law.
  - So this incomplete teaching of grace has given rise to the idea that obedience to God is just not that important.
- c Scripture does say we are no longer under law but under grace (Rom 6:14). But when Paul says that and other similar phrases, it means that we are not under the law as means of justification.
- We are not saved by obeying God's law. We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. But that doesn't negate the importance of obeying God's moral law.
- d In Galatians Paul says we are no longer under the curse of the law, the curse of trying to be justified by obedience to God's law (Gal 3:10-13).
- No, we cannot be justified through obedience to God's law, rather we are justified by grace through faith.
  - But that faith that receives God's grace is the same faith that obeys God's law.
- Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. (Rom 1:5).*
- e Jesus took it even further when he said, *If love me you will keep my commandments (John 14:15).*
- The outflow of love for God is obedience. In the same way, the outcome of understanding grace is obedience. Titus 2 says the grace of God *teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness* (aka obey God).

- Obedience is the way you demonstrate your love for God and the way you demonstrate you truly understand the grace of God.
- f James says, *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (James 1:22).* Obey it.

## Conclusion

- 1 Now to obey God's words you have to know God's words. You have to know them well.
  - a It's not enough to listen to me once a week. Jesus said, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4).
  - b That means that God's word is like bread and you eat bread (food) more than once a week.
- 2 You eat food daily and therefore you need to read God's Word daily. And to make that a pattern here are some tips that will keep your from getting sidetracked with your Bible reading:
  - a Avoid "Easy" Bible Reading
    - Recognize that consistent Bible reading requires discipline and effort. As Paul told Timothy, *Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7).*
    - It is not unspiritual to discipline yourself ... to do what the flesh resists. Determination, resolve, and self-discipline are necessary to consistently read the Bible.
    - You have to realize this: When it comes to the effort to understand God's word, work is not the same as works. You're not reading to be more loved by God, your reading to find out more about the God who loves you so much he gave up his Son for you.
  - b Overcome Guilty Bible Reading.
    - Have you ever felt unworthy to pray or to expect God to speak to you from the Bible? Of course, you have, we all have.
    - That's ironic, however, when you consider that Bible is a book that is designed to help sinners access God's grace. Don't let feelings of unworthiness keep you from God's Word.
    - We need the Bible most when we've read and obeyed it the least. Soak yourself afresh in the gospel. Confess your sin and in faith open your Bible and expect God to speak to your heart.
  - c Move Beyond Performance-Based Reading.

- It's good to keep track of your reading but if you're reading the Bible only to feel better about yourself or appease God then keeping track can be dangerous.
- You go to the Bible not to get more gold stars but to get more of God. You go to the Bible not to be happy about your performance but so that your soul can be happy in God,

d Engage Your Heart

- When Bible feels mechanical, stale or empty turn to Psalm 119. It is 176 verses that remind you why you need to read and learn the Scripture.
- Use it as a prayer guide to lead you in repentance and engage your heart so that you feel the weight, glory and value of God's Word in your life.

e Read in Community

- We were never meant to walk alone in our faith journey. Surrounding ourselves with others who share our love for God's Word strengthens and encourages our obedience to God. This is why small groups are so beneficial.
- That's the idea behind something the Psalmist says near the end of this section in verse 63... *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts (Psalm 119:63).*

- 3 If God is to consistently be our portion it must be our practice to regularly read God's Word, meditate on God's Word, study God's Word in our own devotional life and also to gather every week to listen to the teaching of God's Word and discuss it with others.

### Small Group Discussion Questions:

- 1 Review what it means for God to be your "portion"? How is this concept different from simply viewing God as a source of blessings?
- 2 The psalmist made a resolute promise to obey God's words. How might making such a verbal commitment impact our daily walk with God? Have you ever made such a commitment?

- 3 How do we balance the concept of personal resolve to obey God with the need for God's grace to empower that obedience? Why are both necessary?
- 4 How would you explain the relationship between God's grace and obedience to someone who thinks being "under grace" means they don't need to follow God's commands? How might viewing God's commands as protective rather than restrictive change our attitude towards obedience?
- 5 Which of the four types of Bible reading to avoid (easy, guilty, performance, mechanical) do you struggle with most? Which of these do you struggle the most with and why? What could you do to change it?
- 6 The sermon mentions that obedience flows from love for God. How have you experienced this in your own life?