“How Shall We Then Live?”

Going through the Essentials, we’ve learned that our good works play no role in gaining our salvation, keeping our salvation, or proving our salvation. So why should we put forth the effort that obedience to God requires? Sin is so easy; so natural. Why fight it? God’s Word gives us the answer; multiple answers, in fact; multiple reasons why obedience is infinitely better than sin.

This morning: 6th lesson of Essentials – “How Shall we then Live?”

In case you haven’t noticed – there’s a flow to the Essentials packet
- Lessons 1,2,5 – Who is God the Father, Son, & Spirit?
  o God is the foundation of everything – so we started there

- Lesson 3 – How can I be saved?
  o How can I become right with this God?
  o Gospel – saved by grace through faith alone – my works play no part
    ▪ distinguishes us from every other religion
    ▪ distinguishes us from official teaching of Roman Catholicism:
      justification = belief + sacraments + avoidance of mortal sins
  o No – salvation can be yours right this moment
  o Simply believe that Jesus died for your sins & rose from the dead

- Lesson 4 – Can I know for sure?
  o How do I know that I am saved?
  o Can I be confident that once I’m saved, I’m always saved?
  o YES – eternal security
  o Just as our works play no role in gaining our salvation, so they play no role in keeping it
    ▪ distances us from Arminian theology – can’t lose our salvation
    ▪ distances us from 5-point Calvinist theology – works are not proof of salvation
  • if you doubt, look to Jesus, not to your works

That leads us to this week’s study…
- If works don’t earn our salvation, or keep it, or prove it, then what’s the point of good works? Why should believers obey God?
  o This Essentials lesson title is “How Shall we then Live?”
  o But we’re going to focus a little narrower this morning because of limited time
- Narrower question: “Why choose obedience?”

Be honest – obedience is not easy
- in contrast, sin is – it comes natural!
- obedience takes work, effort, sacrifice
- if it doesn’t earn, keep, or prove our salvation, then why do it?
This morning is all about **motivation**

- Humans make choices based on motivation
- To obey God we need **sufficient motivation** to overcome the natural motivation we have towards sin
  - flesh, world, Satan already constantly motivating us towards sin
- So we turn to God’s Word to find sufficient motivation
- Fortunately, God’s Word has plenty
  - A primary reason God gave us the Bible – to motivate obedience
  - It’s full of reasons – far too many for this morning
  - Just overview big ones
    - write down these motivations & verse references
    - review and begin to memorize later this week
- I’m going to give you these reasons to obey as a chart
  - compares the results of obedience with the results of sin

**Why obey God and avoid sin?**
**Because obedience...**

- **1) Obedience: Loves God — Sin: Grieves God**
  - **Loves:**
    - John 14:21 - "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."
    - “love” in Bible primarily an action, not a feeling
    - to love God is to obey God
    - if you say you love God but choose not to obey Him, then you’re lying
    - What you’re actually doing: grieving God...
  - **Grieves:**
    - Psalm 78:40-41 - *How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness And grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, And pained the Holy One of Israel.*
    - summary of actions of Exodus generation
    - respond to God’s saving love with 40 years of disobedience!
    - God is not unaffected
    - transcendent, but still deeply grieved
- **2) Obedience: Delights God — Sin: Angers God**
  - **Delights:**
    - Hos 6:6a *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice...*
      - The Israelites sacrificed a lot of animals
      - Yet God says, “What really would have made me happy, is some obedience, some loyalty.”
      - Our obedience makes the heart of the Creator happy!!
  - **Angers:**
    - Ezra 8:22b ..."The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him."
    - sin = forsaking/rebelling against God
    - that makes God angry
    - Good news: He is “slow to anger” – patient with us
    - BUT, if we continue in sin, His anger grows
    - Read prophets or Revelation – NOT a good thing to be under the anger of God! Terrifying!
- Avoid His anger through obedience

- **3) Obedience: Glorifies God — Sin: Dishonors God**
  - **Glorifies:**
    - Mt 5:16 *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*
  - **Dishonors:**
    - Rom 2:23-24 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,”....
      - the story of the OT – the sins of God’s people, the Jews, profaned the name of God – shamed His reputation
    - one of most common reasons unbelievers give for dismissing Christianity? “Christians are hypocrites!”
      - Doesn’t excuse their rejection of God
      - But does indict us!
      - When we sin, we are denying the truth of what we believe
      - That dishonors God in the eyes of the world

 Let’s pause for a moment and think about these first 3 motives for obedience.
  - 56% of working Americans admit they’ve stolen office products from work
    - big company – huge supply room
    - Who’s going to know? who’s going to care?
    - They have bigger things to worry about! Excusable
  - I think that’s often how we rationalize our sin
    - God is so big. He’s got a whole universe to look after!
    - Surely He doesn't care that much about this little sin.
  - Well actually, yes He does!
    - Cares about it more than we do
    - No “small sin” in God’s eyes – all treachery – grieves Him
    - Flip side: no “small act of obedience”? He delights! Will never forget it!

- **4) Obedience: Draws us close to God — Sin: Separates us from God**
  - 1 John 1:5-7 - ... *God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*
  - Light vs Darkness – righteousness vs. sin
    - God is completely, unchangeably righteous
    - He cannot tolerate any sin in His presence – not even a little
    - Therefore - if we choose to “walk in sin” – we distance ourselves from Him
      - loss of fellowship, not relationship – still His children, but estranged
    - If we confess & turn from sin, fellowship restored
  - Jesus put it this way: John 15:14 – “*You are My friends if you do what I command you.*”
    - To enjoy a growing friendship with Jesus, you MUST obey
5) Obedience: Brings joy — Sin: Brings misery
   - Joy:
     John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."
     - If you want a life full of divine joy – you MUST obey
     - a joyful life does not mean an “easy” life – life is hard
     - but if you obey, God’s supernatural joy will fill & sustain you even in the trials of life
   - Misery:
     Ps 32:10 “Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.”
     - We know this by experience
     - sin leads to...
     - guilt, shame, regret, anxiety, fear
     - relational pain, financial pain, physical pain
     - even death
     - That’s no accident – that’s how God designed the universe to work – a natural law of life
     - For believers – goes even deeper – God loves us too much to leave us alone in our sin – so He disciplines us
     - Rev 3:19 “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”
     - Brings painful consequences of sin into the life of the believer to motivate repentance
     - can be as severe as death – Ananias, Saphira, Corinthian believers
     - Sin ALWAYS leaves misery in its wake – inescapable law for believer & unbeliever alike
     - Only obedience leads to joy

6) Obedience: Brings peace — Sin: Brings slavery
   - Peace:
     Isaiah 32:17 The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.
     - Hebrews: “the peaceful fruit of righteousness”
     - result of righteousness = peace – true, lasting peace
     - helpful to me
     - temptation often comes in stressful times – offers an escape
     - but what I really want is peace – only comes through obedience
   - Slavery:
     Romans 6:15-16 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?
     - Paul’s question: why obey?
     - Answer: because you become a slave of what you choose
     - Obedience – then obedience becomes easier, more natural
     - Sin – then sin becomes easier, more natural
- Theology of habits & addictions
  - Scientists confirming it – why do people become addicts of bad behaviors? Because God wired us that way!
  - What you choose today begins to form a habit – either a habit of obedience that leads to a righteous life or a habit of sin that leads to addiction that leads to death
- ALL SIN IS ADDICTIVE.
  - No small amount of sin you can play with
  - It will own you!
  - It will destroy you
  - It will destroy other people as well...

- 7) Obedience: Blesses others — Sin: Curses others
  - Easy to prove from the stories or narratives in Scripture
    - Blesses:
      - Abraham – sacrifice Isaac – covenant confirmed – brings blessing to whole world
      - Peter – Acts 2 – boldly obeys command to preach gospel – 3000 saved, church begins
      - Cornelius walks faithfully with God – whole house saved
      - Obedience unleashes blessing
    - In contrast... Curses:
      - David’s pride – census - 70,000 men die
      - Solomon’s immorality and idolatry – nation divided
      - Peter – Galatians – desire to please people, rejects Gentiles, church in danger of collapse
  - Sin always brings destruction into the lives of those around us.
    - That includes people we know – spouse, kids, church
    - That includes the world at large
      - ex: you buy $100 pot – accessory to murder
      - prosecutor can’t make the case – but God can – will hold us responsible
  - Finally, last reason – results of our choice outlive this life...

- 8) Obedience: Results in reward when we see Jesus — Sin: Results in shame when we see Jesus
  - 2 Cor 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
  - Reward:
    Rev 2:26-27 - ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations…”
  - Shame:
    1 John 2:28 – Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.
      - “little children” = children of God – John is talking to believers
      - back to Jn 15 – you “abide in Jesus” through obedience
      - if we don’t abide in Christ thru obedience, then we’ll fall to our knees in shame
        - will be comforted – “wipe away every tear”
        - but there will be tears for the unfaithful believer
Conclusion:
“Sin is not just wrong, it’s absurd.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obedience...</th>
<th>Sin...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. loves God</td>
<td>grieves God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. delights God</td>
<td>angers God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. glorifies God</td>
<td>dishonors God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. draws me nearer to God</td>
<td>distances me from God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. leads to joy</td>
<td>leads to misery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. leads to peace</td>
<td>leads to slavery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. blesses others</td>
<td>curses others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. results in reward</td>
<td>results in shame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application
- Review this list
- Memorize a few of the motivational verses
- Call it up when temptation comes

Next week: Okay, so we should obey. But why is it so tough?
Then how do we do it?
- Through the Spirit
- Through the Word
- Through the Church

Reference card:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obedience...</th>
<th>Sin...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. loves God - John 14:21</td>
<td>grieves God - Psalm 78:40-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. delights God - Hosea 6:6</td>
<td>angers God - Ezra 8:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. glorifies God - Matthew 5:16</td>
<td>dishonors God - Romans 2:23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. draws me nearer to God - 1 John 1:5-7</td>
<td>distances me from God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. leads to joy - John 15:10</td>
<td>leads to misery - Psalm 32:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. leads to peace - Isaiah 32:17</td>
<td>leads to slavery - Romans 6:15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. blesses others - (Abraham, Cornelius)</td>
<td>curses others - (David, Solomon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. results in reward - 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 2:26-27</td>
<td>results in shame - 1 John 2:28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>