

# The Dynamics of Obedience

By Skip Elmore 8/4/99

I like a good old-fashioned theological discussion with a Bible scholar as well as anyone, but, in my opinion, there is only one theological question worth asking: **“Can Jesus be savior without being Lord?”**

What do you think; can He? **Is obedience an option?** Saying we love the Lord does not mean He is Lord in our life! **“Lordship”** will inherently bring authentic humility which is not a self deprecating attitude; it is realizing the source of our providence and with that, an awareness and privilege of possessing the **“grace”** that accompanies it.

**John 8:28** gives us a perfect picture of total **lordship**, an absolute sinless life (no self-directedness):

*Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son, you will know that I am He, and that **I do nothing on my own authority** but speak as the Father taught Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to Him.”*

**Luke 6:46** says:

*“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”*

**Matthew 5:13** says:

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”*

**Matthew 7:21** says:

*“Not everyone who calls Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”*

**Matthew 10:22** says:

*Everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me, but those who endure **to the end** will be saved.*

**Matthew 10:38,39** says:

*“And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.”*

**Exodus 32:33** says:

*And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.”*

**Malachi 1:6** says:

*“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?”*

**2 Timothy 2:12 & 13** says:

*“**If we endure**, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful (to Himself); for He cannot deny Himself.*

**Hebrews 6:4 – 6** says:

*“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put him to open shame.”*

**Hebrews 12:14b** says:

*“Without holiness, no one will see the Lord...”*

**1<sup>st</sup> John 3:10** says:

*“Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God”*

**2 Peter 2:20-22** says:

*When people escape from wicked ways by learning about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up with sin and become its slave again, they are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the right way to live than to know it and then reject the Holy commandments that were given to them.*

**Now consider these two Scriptures:**

**Deuteronomy 4:31** says:

*For the Lord your God is a merciful God; **He will not abandon or destroy you** or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which He confirmed to them by oath.*

**John 5:24** says:

*I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent Me have eternal life. **They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death to life.***

## **Are these scriptures in conflict with the previous ones???**

They seem to create a sense of security among some Christians that, many times, is applied recklessly. Not being abandoned is a wonderful promise **we can believe wholeheartedly**, however, we should never confuse not being abandoned with self-destruction by our disobedience to God's commandments.

Being abandoned would mean we are being left behind. A deliberate and continuing lifestyle of self-directed disobedience means **we** are doing the abandoning by choosing to destroy the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that allows a transformation into Godly fellowship. The two concepts are not the same. God would never abandon us. Our salvation is a gift of an eternal relationship with God. When we destroy the relationship through a continuing self-directed behavior, who has abandoned whom?

Would you want to spend eternity with someone who has abandoned the wisdom and the counsel and the oneness of the Spirit of a loving God in favor of relying on his or her own self-directed nature, rather than living the transformed life of Holiness? The self-directed lifestyle can never be compatible with the wisdom and counsel and oneness of the Spirit of God's supernatural empowerment. God's empowerment is essential to the born again lifestyle! **Why is this?** Every problem that exists, every newspaper headline, every bit of bad news, poor relationships, sickness and even death is a result of Genesis 3:6. This is when human kind chose to live the self directed life (the sin nature) and give up the wisdom and counsel and singleness of Spirit of their Creator. This is when **fear** replaced **love!!!**

Romans 8:9b tells us anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him! If we do not belong to Him, is it possible to have eternal life with Him? **No!** Can Christ be Savior even if we do not have His Spirit within us? **Romans 8:12-14** says **no**. The question becomes not so much whether Jesus is Lord or not, but who possesses His Spirit and who does not!

I believe the sanctification process is a key indicator of salvation. If there is a chosen willingness to be disobedient to Scripture and no indication of the beginning stages of sanctification, did salvation ever take place? This is the age-old question.

### **Ezekiel 36:27** says:

*And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you **to walk** in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.*

What if we choose **not to walk** in God's statutes? The Bible is full of evidence that we are products of our choices from the time Adam and Eve chose the wrong tree (the self directed attitude called SIN). Does this mean we are also choosing to disallow our Creator's Holy Spirit to enter and be hosted in our heart as well?

**Romans 6:10** says: *"For the death that He died, He died to sin, once and for **all**; but the life that He lives, He lives for God."*

When we choose to be included in the "**all**," in Romans 6:10, do we have the option of choosing to avoid the command to be obedient? **Revelation 3:16** says Jesus will spit you out of His mouth.

**Hebrews 7:27** tells us we do not need to offer up sacrifices daily for our sins. Does this mean we can keep sin as a lifestyle? Romans 6:23 tells us the wages of sin is death.

## **The Arminius Predestination Doctrine**

- \*Individual persons are not chosen for salvation.
- \*The way of salvation is predestined.  
(The emphasis is on condition, not decree)
- \*God decreed to appoint His Son to destroy sin.
- \*Individuals choose to accept or reject the condition.  
(God did not decree selected individuals only to make Christ a mere instrument of His decree)  
(If God's decree focused on select individuals, where would faith fit in?)

To cease to exercise faith is to relinquish Christian fellowship. Read **Hebrews 11:6** again!

### **Be reminded:**

**"Christ"** – Is the Title given to the **Spirit** of the **Creative agent** of the **God Power** in the beginning.

**"Jesus"** – Is the Name given when the Spirit of the Christ was personified to provide Human atonement.

John 14:6 reminds us: *"No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (**Through hosting the Holy Spirit**)

Remember 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:12 & 13 from page one?

*If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful (to Himself); for He cannot deny Himself. Where is our humility?*

**Now consider this, John 6:37 – 40 says:** 37 *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me **I will certainly not cast out**.* 38 *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.* 39 *And this **is the will** of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me **I loose nothing**, but raise it up on the last day.* 40 *For this **is the will** of My Father, that **everyone** that beholds the Son and believes in Him, **may have eternal life**; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.*

**John 3:16 – 18** also promises that the believer will not perish. Further, if it is by “grace” that we are saved, as opposed to “works,” then how could our “sin or disobedience” cause this salvation to be revoked? The premise being that if we didn’t earn it by our good action, then we can’t lose it by our bad action.

This would appear to be an accurate dividing of the word of God. The merits of our good deeds could never save us; therefore, the enormity of our continuing sin would never disqualify us from eternal salvation.

Mr. Arminius, whose disciples produced the “Remonstrance” in 1610, taught that the believer could lose his salvation and quoted passages like **Matthew 5:13** and **Exodus 32:33** to support the view. The book of Hebrews certainly does provide some strong language in support of one’s loss of a previously attained salvation, while Exodus 32 is quite direct in its message! Could the Bible be contradictory in its teaching on this most important matter?

**John 6: 37** is quite clear and, I believe, should be taken literally. Jesus said that anyone who trusts Him, who would come to Him, He would not cast him or her out. Isn’t this the nature of our God? He is patient and loving, desiring that no one should perish but rather that all would come to repentance (**II Peter 3:9**).

Time and again throughout Scripture, we see a loving, patient God waiting for a rebellious people to come to Him and find rest. Jesus Himself said that He desired to gather His people like a hen gathers her chicks but that they were unwilling (**Matt. 23:37**). Once people do repent and take refuge in the salvation God provides, do you think He is going to then cast them out? Not according to **John 10:28 & 29**:  
*And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”*

**John 6:37** can be taken literally and without exception. He who comes to Jesus Christ will not be cast out by Him. Verse **39**, however, must be read more carefully. Notice that it says it “**is the will**” of Him that none be lost. It does not say, “**None shall be lost.**” This brings us to a point that deserves pause to explore a basic and essential ingredient of God’s design and nature.

### THE FREE WILL ISSUE

God does not impose or force His will on anyone with regard to our choosing Him. He will enforce His judgment on a lawless and rebellious creation, but He will not force His redemptive provision upon us. He designed it that way because we could not have a “**relationship**” with Him if He controlled our fellowship. We would behave like mere robotic programmed puppets. That’s not who we are. Humanity possesses free choice!!!

God created us as “free-will” agents, able to choose or reject Him. That element of free choice is what gives meaning and character to our existence – it is what makes us unique, independent creatures with the capacity to “map our own course”. Free will is actually a gift from God. The greatest fulfillments (and greatest heartaches) are available to man *because* he has free will. God will never override the right to choose, a right provided to us who are created in His image and likeness. For example, **Matthew 6:14 & 15** tells us if we choose to forgive others we will be forgiven, however if we choose **not** to forgive others, we will **not** be forgiven. This is a sobering thought to ponder if we think our lifestyle and attitude do not matter!

It follows therefore that although **God has a decided will** in the matter; the outcome may not be in accordance with that will. We have only to look around to see if this is true, i.e.- is it God’s will to terminate the life of an unborn fetus? Is rape, murder, burglary and the like in line with God’s will?

Scripture says (**II Peter 3:9**) that it is God's will that no person go to hell. Hell is a place originally prepared for Satan and his fallen angels, not for humanity. I would conjecture also that God never expected or planned to lose the "Son of the Morning" or any of the "Sons of God" either.

Although **John 6:39** says it is God's will that none who are given to the Son should be lost, it is not a guarantee that such will be the case because of the unalterable fact that God will not override man's will. Verse 40 of John 6 is the same scenario. What we see in this verse is God's will, not a declaration of the outcome.

John 17 will guide us to see if the Father's will, as expressed in John 6:37-40, was actually fulfilled. Here Jesus is praying to the Father about His disciples. These were intimate disciples (later called apostles) that were handpicked by Jesus Himself (**John 6:70**). Some will argue that Judas Iscariot was never a true disciple in the first place, however the evidence and message of the scriptures tell us otherwise. **Matthew 10:1-4** says He (Jesus) identified Judas as His and furthermore gave him authority over "*unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness*" (vs. 8).

Do you think Jesus, the perfect Son of God, whom in John 8: 28 said "*I do nothing on My own*" made a mistake and chose an unbeliever? Furthermore, would our Lord give the kind of authority described here to an unbeliever? I don't think so. **Mark 3:19** and **Luke 6:16** include Judas among the twelve. He was a legitimate disciple, chosen of the Lord and ordained right along with Peter, James, John and the rest.

Yet Jesus said He lost him (**John 17:12**). How could He lose him if He never had him in the first place? We see here that the Father's will as expressed in **John 6:39** was not fulfilled. This only reiterates God's underlying principle of not superseding man's will. He does everything He can to prevent men and women from going to hell. He proved that by sending His only Son, but He will not block our way if we insist on going there, either before or after a true salvation experience.

Judas was in what can be called the first order of apostates. He was a genuine disciple who, by entertaining suggestions from Satan along the way, eventually renounced Christ and thereby perished.

This and the story of Eve in the garden should be a lesson to all of us. Don't entertain the subtle suggestions of the enemy, lest it go too far and we find no way of repentance (**Hebrews 12:17**). We must be sure to follow the scripture's advice and "resist the devil (immediately) and he will flee from us." There is no sin too great that God will not forgive (**I John 1:9**). From studying these scriptures it appears that the problem is the more ground sin is given, the more difficult it becomes to confess and renounce it from our lives. Could there be a conclusion that forgiveness might not happen at all?

#### **Now let us look at John 10:25-29**

*Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe me; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and **no one shall snatch them out of My hand.** My father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **no one shall snatch them out of the Father's hand.**"*

The forgoing scriptures are foundational to the Eternal Securitist view and I support the basic assertion of this passage, i.e., after salvation is received, a person cannot be plucked (snatched) out of the Father's hand.

Regardless of your condition or present relationship to the Lord, if you once confessed Him as Savior, no one is able to dislodge you from that position; not sin, not the devil, no one. However, **you yourself can voluntarily leave (Hebrews 6:4-6)!** **John 10:28** says, "*I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish...*" Who are them? "Them" are those described in verses 26 and 27, those that believe, vs. 26 and those who hear and follow, vs. 27. You shall never perish if you stay "in them." Your continued believing, hearing and following secures Jesus' promise for you that "you shall never perish."

Therefore, we can conclude that **John 10:25-29** does not preclude the possibility of ever falling from grace. Conversely, Paul accused the Galatian church of that very thing in his letter to them (**Galatians 5:4**).

Another scripture that should be studied is found in **Ephesians 2:8** and **9** which tells us salvation is by God's grace and, therefore, nothing that man could do can secure, maintain or forfeit this salvation.

However, if you take a close look at this scripture, you must consider the fact that verse 8 says it is by grace through faith. Some would argue that both the grace and the faith are of God. It is safe to say that grace is entirely from God, not requiring any action or assistance on our part.

The faith mentioned is not simplistic. **Romans 12:3** shows that God gives faith to man and James tells us in his first chapter that every perfect gift is from God. It is evident that faith is a gift from God.

The next question then is, what is faith? **Hebrews 11:1** gives us the definition. Briefly, faith is **our response to God's gift**. With this understanding of faith, let's return to Ephesians 2:8 which says salvation is a result of God's grace and the gift of faith **which requires a response on our part**. This fact refutes the logic that we cannot lose our salvation since we did nothing to obtain it in the first place.

**Ephesians 4:30** tells us God's Holy Spirit sealed us for the day of redemption. However, **Romans 11:17-22** tells us this seal can be broken. An oft-used parallel is the illustration of a natural son or daughter. The premise is that once you are born a child of particular parents, you will always be their child; your actions have no relevance to your relationship or genetic position.

This concept overlooks the fact that we were all children of wrath, whose father is the devil (**Ephesians 2:3**). If we could never divorce ourselves from our parental heritage, we would still have Satan as our father, **God forbid!**

In conclusion, can we then flow in and out of salvation and sanctification as we please, entering and exiting as it suits our needs at any particular time? **Can Jesus be savior without being Lord?** What do you think; **can He???**

**Is obedience an option???**

As we study to determine a conclusion, we **must** recognize the difference between **EXEGESIS** and **EISEGESIS**. We must apply **EXEGESIS** when we study the Bible.

**EXEGESIS** (ek' sah jee' sis) means seeking to accurately interpret the Bible on its merits and shape opinion in light of Bible truths.

**EISEGESIS** (eye' sah jee' sis) is searching the Scriptures in such a way as to make the Bible appear to support a preconceived position or feeling.

God's truth is never established or defined by feelings or desires. Emotions and feelings are wonderful, essential servants. They allow experiencing and then expressing our environment in ways our intellectual reasoning and processing could never provide. **However, emotions and feelings become terribly destructive when we let them become our master.** We should always avoid making important decisions and choices for a season following traumatic experiences.

The term "**Born Again**" as observed in John 3:3 and 3:7 and again in 1 Peter 1:23 has left genuine Christianity with a concept that sometimes needs clarification. For many, the term seems to imply that there are two levels of Christianity. Some are those radical ones who call themselves born again and then the regular kind who believe they are Christians, perhaps because of an emotional experience or prayer at the altar, but without the transformation leading to "Lordship" which they might see as being too fanatic.

Of course, if we are not born again, **in possession of the Holy Spirit**, experiencing the incredible wisdom and counsel that takes us beyond depending only on our intellect and worldly resources, we are absent Christian "**grace.**" So, as stated earlier, a good question to ask is: **Can Jesus be our Savior without being our Lord???** **If He can't, it's obvious; some of our work is within the church body!!!**