

James T. Jeremiah
Obedience
June 1, 1970

Transcript

Speaker 1:

Our Father in the quietness of this hour, we come to thee as empty vessels. We thank thee for the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us on Calvary's tree. And for all the blessings that He brings to us. We ask now that He will be with the speaker of the morning hour. That he may bring to us a new truth from thy word. Help each one of us, we live in this strife torn country of ours. That we may be a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. That we may truly say as recorded in thy word, "That in all things, He might have the preeminence." And we'll praise thee in Jesus name, amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm sure this morning I would be remiss. If I didn't take time in this last opportunity of chapel, at least to me, for this year to express a note of appreciation and praise to the Lord for the good year we've had at Cedarville College. I think the things that mean most, to most of us is that we've seen decisions made for Christ. Some of you came here you were not saved, you have been saved during the year. A number of you have made decisions of dedication to the Lord. And you're going away from here in a much different fashion than when you came. I admit that it's possible that some of you came, maybe going away in a worse spiritual condition because you did not make the decisions you ought to make. Maybe before this day is over, this year is over, you can see the importance of doing the thing God wants you to do. I suspect in many ways, this has been one of our best years at Cedarville as we look back over the days and as we anticipate the future, we look forward to greater things to come.

James T. Jeremiah:

I would suppose that you would expect me to exhort you briefly on how you ought to go home and raise \$800,000 for a new science hall. I'm not going to do that. Of course, if you go home and you find somebody with a lot of money, they don't know what to do with it. You call Mr. Turner long distance, reverse the charge it's on his budget, and he'll be glad to talk to you and if he refuses, you just call me and I'll put it on Mr. St. Clair's budget.

James T. Jeremiah:

I think the best thing any of us can do for the cause of Christ and Cedarville College is to go back home and get to work for God in our local churches. I think the thing that really challenges us and makes us rejoice more than anything else. We go out into work in these churches, as most of us, or many of us do a lot of the time. Is to hear folks say, "Cedarville College students are different in this, they come back home and they get busy for Christ." This is vitally important to your life, certainly it's an important matter so far as anything that you do to represent this institution.

James T. Jeremiah:

I've discovered since being a Christian, that the Christian life is difficult. I have been saved longer than some of you have been. I was saved in 1933 and I discovered soon after I became a Christian, that it was not an easy road. That there were difficulties along the way. To be sure there's a savior who can see you through them and over them and around them or under them any way he wants to, but it's not an easy thing. Now if I would ask you this morning, what you consider to be the most difficult responsibility in

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the Christian experience, I suspect I'd have a number of answers. I suspect somebody would say, "To me, the most difficult experience in the Christian life is a faithful life of prayer."

James T. Jeremiah:

I think I must disagree with you. Somebody else would say, "The most difficult thing in the Christian life is the matter of witnessing for Christ." And contrary to the testimonies of many people it still is not easy always to open the door or have the door open to speak a word for the Lord. So I wouldn't say that witnessing was the most difficult. Here's another person who said, "The most difficult thing for me is to have a consistent Bible study time in my life." That's not the most difficult thing for me though I admit that it's mighty difficult. Another said "I just don't like this idea of having to be in church every time the doors open and going to church is hard for me."

James T. Jeremiah:

And another said, "I found that taking a stand for Christ, I was persecuted and I don't like to stand that's tough. I can't do that." And every once in a while, you'll find somebody who said, "The most difficult problem I have in the Christian life, is trying to do something about this matter of tithing. That really hits me where it hurts." I don't think any of these are really essentially the most difficult thing, but they're all related to what is the most difficult thing. I discovered the most difficult thing in the Christian life for me, is obedience.

James T. Jeremiah:

I discovered if I obeyed God and mind God, I'll witness. If I mind the Lord, do what he says, I'll tithe. If I do what the Lord commands, I certainly will pray, study my Bible, go to the house of God. I think we need to stop once in a while and find out what is involved in this matter of obedience. The classic illustration of the opposite side of this is found in the old Testament, in the book of first Samuel chapter 15. Now I want to be positive this morning, by the way, when we hear all the talk these days about whether it's right to be positive or negative, I just like to know how you can be positive without being negative?

James T. Jeremiah:

What is the significance of positive, if there is no negative? The word of God deals with both. You wouldn't have very much electricity without both of them. And you don't have very much of a Christian testimony or Christian life without somewhere along the line facing some negatives. I don't want to be negative all the time, I'm going to deal with a negative passage of scripture in a positive way that ought to fix it. And this particular chapter of scripture, we have a reference to Saul the first king of Israel.

James T. Jeremiah:

And God had made a statement to him through the prophet Samuel, that he ought to do some particular things and Saul like many of us decided that he had a pretty good way of working it out on his own. He decided to follow God's way and God's will, in his plan. And he ended up in tragedy. And Samuel finally gave him this charge in verse 22, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams." Let me say this to you. It's more important that you obey God in his call in your life, than you go to the far-flung fields of the mission area and preach the gospel in disobedience.

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James T. Jeremiah:

God wants obedient people and only God and the individual knows when we are obedient. What is involved in obedience? First of all, there is the element of revelation, God revealing His will. Did God make known His will to Saul? I think so. If you go back to the first part of the chapter and we find Samuel saying, "The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over this people, Israel. Now, therefore harken thou unto the voice or the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts. I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid in wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." Now, here are the instructions. "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has. Spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

James T. Jeremiah:

He had some pretty clear instructions. God revealed His will to this man in a very remarkable way, specifically, completely, authoritatively, no question about it. He had no argument with God on this. God made known His will, through His prophet, to this king, to do exactly what he wanted done. I admit that it doesn't sound very pleasing. It isn't very attractive, it's rather a bloody mess. But it nonetheless was what God expected these people to do under the leadership of their king in dealing with Amalek, a type of the flesh. But like so many Saul tried to twist it.

James T. Jeremiah:

I remember reading about a Georgia soldier in the civil war who was taken captive by the Northern forces. And the first thing he did when he was taken into captivity by the enemy was to shout out in his Southern drawl, "If there had been just a few more of us Southerners, we would have wiped you Yankees out." And he kept on saying it, "If it just been a few more of us Southerners we'd wipe you Yankees out." And it went from one general, one officer to another until it finally arrived at Grant's post. And the story goes, that General Grant said to the soldier, "Soldier stand up, salute the flag, give allegiance to it, in a minute or you'll be shot."

James T. Jeremiah:

The soldier stood up, he saluted, but he kept on saying it in his own way. He said, "If there had been just a few more of us Yankees, of us rebels, just a few more of those rebels we would have wiped us Yankees out." He got the message, he twisted the way of doing it, but he was still standing up inside. I also heard of two preachers who were arguing over which was the best way to do something, preachers argue one way or another. And finally after the thing had come to a conclusion that one preacher said, "The thing that counts most is that we're both doing the Lord's work you in your way, and I, in his."

James T. Jeremiah:

Now this is revelation twisted. And how easy it is just to have the Lord's direction, slightly turned in order to meet the way we want to think, instead of taking it as God intended it to be taken. Now, another thing that goes along with this matter of obedience, not only revelation or God making known his ways to us, but submission to it. I recognize what I'm saying this morning is not exactly popular. Not popular to Christians, it's not popular to anybody in these days, because we have been told by so many for so long that there is no such thing as authority that we Christians are beginning to believe it. But every one of us like it or not, children of God live under authority and the philosophers and the psychologist and the sociologist and the historians and all the rest can say, "That's authoritarianism."

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It may be, but its scriptural authoritarianism. There is authority, God is the authority, His word is an authority. And when God speaks, we have nothing else to do but to submit, to what God says. I recognize that this is not exactly popular in our time. In verse nine of this chapter 15, the word of God says, "But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs and all that was good and would not utterly destroy them. But everything that was vile and refuse that they destroyed utterly." Now is that obedience? No that's disobedience. And when there is disobedience, there cannot be obedience. There is no mixing of the two, we either do what God says or we don't. God was telling this man Saul, even though it may cut across his rationalistic approach, that he was to utterly destroy, the Amalekites.

James T. Jeremiah:

And Saul and the people thought, "Let's not destroy that which is good." There is nothing good in the flesh. And so they decided that they would spare the good, what for, for religious purposes. Reason got the best of revelation. Human thinking took the place of God's word, direct messages from the Heavenly Father were submitted or subjected rather to the better thinking of human beings. And I've lived long enough to know that when we do this in our lives, we pay a price. When God says something, we ought to say, amen, not just because it's a meeting and we're having a hilarious good time and we say amen in a group meeting, but we ought to say amen to it and mean what we say, do what God commands. Saul's folly was depending upon himself, other than God. He substituted his own thinking and the thinking of his people and his counselors for what God had said. Now, this involves also a matter of devotion. In verses 11 and 13 of this particular chapter, we have the idea set forth here, we want to look at it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Here was a man who was brought face to face with his sin by the prophet of God. And he said, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have obeyed of the voice of the Lord. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. And by the time he said that three or four times there was an old cow that began to moo and an old sheep that began to blat. And I don't know what happened to the Amalekites, whatever kind of a sound they made but finally the prophet of God says, "If you have obeyed the voice of the Lord, what means the bleating of the sheep in mine ears? What happened to them?" You can always depend on it folks, that when we disobey God or fail to obey him, there's always some bleating sheep somewhere that's going to give us away. You can count on it for sure. And here was a man who talked religiously, but he didn't have very much reality because he was not really doing what God commanded him to do.

James T. Jeremiah:

A man was one time asked by another friend. "If you were on an island all by yourself, shipwrecked, and you had the opportunity to get a book, only one, what book would you want?" He said a Bible? "No," he said "Not a Bible." I know that question rashes, some people, the first thing they'd say was a Bible, because after all, what else could you read on the island all by yourself? Book of Shakespeare? Who would want to be on a desert island with the book of Shakespeare all by yourself, all the Shakespeare students I suspect. Book of poems? "No" the man said, "If I were on a desert island all by myself, I wouldn't want a Bible. I wouldn't want a book of Shakespeare. I wouldn't want a book of poems. I would want a manual on ship building. When I got through with that, I'd get all the Bibles I wanted."

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James T. Jeremiah:

I suspect the way to be impressive in such a story as this, is to do a little bit like Saul did and say, "Listen Samuel, I kept all of the best of the sheep in order that, we might have a big sacrifice and please God." Put a little religious twist to it. In all the worst kind of disobedience, is that kind of disobedience that has a religious twist to it. That follows the pathway of disobedience and then has the audacity to blame God for his will. To know what God wants us to do, and then manipulate our thinking until we do what we want to do. And then brazenly tell everybody and tell God in particular, that God's leading us in what we're doing. That was Saul's problem.

James T. Jeremiah:

It was lacking in devotion, and you know what happened to him? Do you want to read his epitaph? Let me read it for you in first Chronicles 10:13. "So Saul died for his transgression, which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not. And also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit who inquired of it and inquired not of the Lord. Therefore, He slew him and turned the kingdom unto David, the son of Jesse." He died prematurely, who knows, but he died because of disobedience. What else is involved in obedience? Action. Action. Verse three of this chapter that I read a moment ago has such words as go, smite, utterly destroy, slay.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now students we're living in a time when it seems to me, there's a great deal of confusion about what is involved in Christian living. Every once in a while, we hear people tell us that all we need to do in the Christian life, is to sit passively by and abide and never rise up to do. The word of God says in James four, seven, "Submit yourself unto God, resist the devil and he'll flee from you." Ephesians six says, "Put on the whole armor of God, stand against the wiles of the devil. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Take the whole armor of God, praying, watching." This involves action.

James T. Jeremiah:

Saul's problem was not in that he acted, but he acted in the wrong way. He did the wrong thing. Others have problems because they do nothing. They never rise up to do anything for God. They say the Christian life is passive. It is the Lord dwelling in me, I sit down and enjoy life and there's no battle. Friend you have not properly diagnosed the problem. There is a battle and there are problems to be faced. Sometimes I think the businessman who went to the church one day and came out and said, "If the meek are to inherit the earth after listening to this, they're going to have to become more aggressive." He'd seen the deadness and the coldness, the indifference, the inactivity.

James T. Jeremiah:

Baseball players I'm sure will appreciate Joe DiMaggio's view of how you can tell when your youth has gone. He said, "When the ball is hit and you start chasing it and your brain immediately cries out, 'Run forward, bend, scoop up the ball, peg it to the in-field.' While you do that, then when that happens and that message comes, 'Run, bend down, scoop up the ball, peg it to the in-field' and you say 'Who me?' Your youth is gone." And when it comes in the life of the Christian, when God says something for us to do and it reacts spiritually to us, and we say something like this with regard to spiritual responsibilities, our victory has gone though we may be young, or we may be old.

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James T. Jeremiah:

There is remuneration in obedience verse 26, Samuel said unto Saul, "I will not return with thee, for thou has rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected thee from being king." He would have possibly remained as king, had he not been disobedient. There is remuneration, reward for the child of God who's obedient too, so run that you may obtain. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." God said, "Be careful that you lose not those things which you have received and receive a full reward." Last of all, obedience involves motivation. What motivated Saul to do what he did? You'll find it in verse 24. Saul said unto Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words because, I feared the people."

James T. Jeremiah:

It's interesting that chapter 15:24 fits well with chapter 12:24, which also has a word concerning fearing. See this man had a problem before he'd gone into the priest's office. God said, "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart." And here's the reason students, faculty members, administrators, all of us. Here's the reason why we need to obey or consider how great things he has done for you. If we obey God, because some preacher in this chapel service, whether it's the president or anybody else says we ought to do it, we'll never get very far. But if we do it because we consider how great things the Lord has done for us, what joy there is in serving him. I said to start with that the Christian life is not altogether easy, but it's blessed it's wonderful.

James T. Jeremiah:

The challenge is here, when Garibaldi the Italian Patriot was recruiting his army. He threw out a challenge to these people, which evoked a great response. Here was his challenge, let me read it, translate this into the Christian challenge and see what it does for you. "Soldiers what I have to offer you is the fatigue, danger, struggle and death. The chill of the cold night in the free air and heat under the burning sun. No lodging, no munitions, no provisions, but forced marches, dangerous watch posts and continual struggle with bayonets against batteries. Those who love freedom and their country may follow me." Few men could resist this challenge.

James T. Jeremiah:

Young people outside the day's dark. And we're living in a challenging day, when the light can shine. I'm not challenging you to an easy life, to be obedient to Jesus Christ in a day, such as this may cost you your life and it may cost me mine. We have to ask ourselves today whether we have the dedication to Jesus Christ, that will enable us to be so obedient that we're going to do what God says, regardless of what men say.

James T. Jeremiah:

Father, we pray that thou will bless the student body. Not only in these closing difficult times of this school year as they face the exams and other responsibilities. Bless them dear Lord during these summer months. Give many of them the opportunity of serving thee and challenging others and leading some to Christ. Protect them on the highways, give them we pray great joy in serving God in the places where they will be through the summer months. We will praise thee for it in Jesus name. Amen.