**Heart & Commandment**

 *by Harry Osborne*

Obedience to God involves two elements both of which are essential. First, we are to obey God from the **heart** and serve Him with a whole heart. Second, obedience to God demands that we follow His **pattern** of instruction as directed in His will. Notice how the Bible ties the two together:

*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the* ***heart*** *that* ***pattern of doctrine*** *to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness* (Romans 6:17-18).

God will not accept a cold, lifeless, half-hearted service from man. He has always demanded and continues to demand our reverential and loving service from the heart. Notice the clear instruction on this point from God's word:

Deuteronomy 6:5 - *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."*

Hebrews 10:22 - *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."*

James 4:8 - *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded."*

1 Peter 3:15 - *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."*

It is plain, then, that God will not be pleased with anything less than our whole-hearted devotion unto Him. No ritualistic attempt to please God without our hearts involved will be acceptable. If we are to live with Christ in eternity, we must give Him our hearts today!

However, service which is heart-felt without being guided by God's pattern of truth is not acceptable either. To please God, our hearts must be properly taught and act in obedience to His commands. The Scripture plainly declares that pleasing God demands both elements:

Psalm 119:2 - *"Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!"*

Psalm 119:10 - *"With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!"*

1 John 5:3 - *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."*

Some people today teach that God will accept whatever service one offers to the Lord with the heart, even if that service is not directed by His will found in the Bible. However, God has clearly insisted that we obey Him not only with a heart-felt service, but in keeping with His commands. Notice how plain that instruction is:

*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him* (1 John 2:3-5).

We cannot forfeit either our whole-hearted service or our adherence to God's commands found in the Bible if we are to please God. Just as wheels and an engine are both essential to a functional car, so are man's heart and God's pattern of instruction essential in pleasing our Lord. Therefore, let us daily yield our hearts and our conduct to His will.

**Obeying God in One's Youth**

*by Heath Rogers*

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’" (Eccl. 12:2). It is sad to see young people choose the world over the Lord. The Bible offers some compelling reasons for one to obey God in their youth.

1. Habits are formed in our youth. (Proverbs 22:6) The older we get, the harder it is to break out of our routine. If we make serving God a way of life in our youth it will stick with us through life.

2. Avoiding the regret of a wasted life. Peter tells us, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3). Regardless of what age we are when we obey the gospel, the life we have lived up to that point is enough time spent in sin. Even if we live to an old age we’ve still really only had a few years to make a difference in this world (Eph. 5:15-17). Many people have to live with the consequences of the sins they committed in their youth. We do reap what we sow - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8).

3. We are not to test God’s patience. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The acceptable time to be saved is when we hear the gospel. "For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2; see also Acts 22:16). The devil will make sure that we never have a convenient time to become a Christian (Acts 24:25; Luke 8:12).

4. We aren’t promised tomorrow. "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away… Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:14, 17). On any given day, the obituary page contains the names of people who didn’t even make it out of their teens! Are you willing to take that chance?