

# The Danger of Optional Obedience

2 Corinthians 4:5

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Shepherd's Community Church

## Misunderstanding

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*(Philippians 2:10-11; Matthew 6:24; John 15:14-15)*

## Meaning

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*(Romans 10:9; 8:7 Luke 9:23-24; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 6:12, 19-20; John 6:44)*

## Mandate

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*(Luke 6:46; Malachi 3:8; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Titus 1:16; John 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Revelation 22:3)*

# The Measure of True Success

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1).

***God is more interested in your faithfulness than He is in your accomplishments.***

Our society is success oriented. We love success stories. We even have television programs that exalt the lifestyles of the rich and famous. But God's standard for success is quite different. Unimpressed by our status or wealth, He looks instead for faithfulness to His will.

Paul understood that principle and diligently pursued his calling as an apostle--one of those unique men who were foundational to the church and recipients, teachers, and writers of the New Testament.

That was a high calling, yet judging from Paul's lifestyle most people would hardly call him successful—having suffered imprisonments, beatings, death threats, shipwrecks, robberies, hatred from his theological enemies, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements (2 Cor. 11:23-27). But none of those things deterred him from obeying God's will. His final testimony was, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). That's true success! Although we're not apostles, we're to follow Paul's example of faithfulness (1 Cor. 11:1). That's possible because, like the Ephesian believers, we are “saints [holy ones] . . . who are faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1). By God's grace we've trusted in Christ as our Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:8-9) and received His righteousness (Phil. 3:9), Spirit (Eph. 3:16), and every resource necessary for faithful, victorious Christian living (Eph. 1:3).

What remains is to cultivate greater love for Christ and more consistent obedience to His Word. Those are the hallmarks of a true disciple and God's measure of success. Make it your goal that your life today warrants the Lord's commendation, “Well done, good and faithful [slave]” (Matt. 25:21).

Suggestions for Prayer:

- Praise God for His wonderful grace, by which He granted you salvation and all the spiritual resources you need.
- Thank Him for His Word, where you learn the principles of godly living.
- Ask Him for opportunities today to encourage the faithfulness of others.

For Further Study: Read Ephesians 1:3-4; 2:10; Titus 2:11-12

- What is the goal of your salvation?
- Are you living each day in light of that goal?

From *Drawing Near*, John MacArthur  
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