

Obedience

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Introduction

The Root Verb

Thomas defines the root verb ὑπακούω [hupakouō] as a compound of *hupo* [under] and *akouō* [to hear, listen], meaning “to listen, attend to” [5219].

BDAG say it means “(1) to follow instructions, obey, follow, be subject to; (2) to grant one’s request, hear; (3) to answer a knock at the door, technically of the door-keeper, whose duty it is to listen for the signals of those who wish to enter, and to admit them if they are entitled to do so: open or answer (the door).”

*Acts 12:11-17 ... 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” 12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to *answer. 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. 15 They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, “It is his angel.” 16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed. 17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, “Report these things to James and the brethren.” Then he left and went to another place. (NASB95)*

Strong/Thayer say it means “(1) to listen, to harken; of one who on the knock at the door comes to listen who it is, (the duty of a porter); (2) to harken to a command, to obey, be obedient to, submit to” [5219].

Louw & Nida define it as “to obey on the basis of having paid attention to — ‘to obey, obedience. Terms expressing the concept of ‘obedience’ may frequently be rendered in some languages as ‘to do what one says’ or ‘to carry out someone’s orders’” [36.15].

This word occurs 21x in the NT (Matt. 8:27; Mark 1:27; 4:41; Luke 8:25; 17:6; Acts 6:7; 12:13; Rom. 6:12, 16, 17; 10:16; Eph. 6:1, 5; Phil. 2:12; Col. 3:20, 22; 2 Thess. 1:8; 3:14; Heb. 5:9; 11:8; 1 Pet. 3:6).

*Matthew 8:27 ... 27 The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea ***obey Him?**" (NASB95)*

*Mark 1:27 ... 27 They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they ***obey Him.**" (NASB95)*

*Mark 4:41 ... 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea ***obey Him?**" (NASB95)*

*Luke 8:25 ... 25 And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they ***obey Him?**" (NASB95)*

*Luke 17:6 ... 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would ***obey** you. (NASB95)*

*Acts 6:7 ... 7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were ***becoming *obedient** to the faith. (NASB95)*

*Acts 12:13 ... 13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to ***answer.** (NASB95)*

*Romans 6:12 ... 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you ***obey** its lusts, (NASB95)*

*Romans 6:16 ... 16 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? (NASB95)*

*Romans 6:17 ... 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you ***became *obedient** from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, (NASB95)*

*Romans 10:16 ... 16 However, they did not all ***heed** the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 6:1 ... 1 Children, ***obey** your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 6:5 ... 5 Slaves, be ***obedient** to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; (NASB95)*

*Philippians 2:12 ... 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always ***obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (NASB95)*

*Colossians 3:20 ... 20 Children, be ***obedient** to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. (NASB95)*

*Colossians 3:22 ... 22 Slaves, in all things ***obey** those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. (NASB95)*

*2 Thessalonians 1:8 ... 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not ***obey** the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (NASB95)*

*2 Thessalonians 3:14 ... 14 If anyone does not ***obey** our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 5:9 ... 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who ***obey** Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:8 ... 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, ***obeyed** by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 3:6 ... 6 just as Sarah ***obeyed** Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (NASB95)*

The Related Noun

Thomas defines the related noun ὑπακοή [hupakoē] as from *hupakouō* [to listen, attend to], meaning “obedience” [5218].

BDAG say it refers to “(1) a state of being in compliance, obedience (one listens and follows instructions); (a) generally, the obedience which every slave owes his master; (b) predominately of obedience to God and God’s commands; (2) reply made to a question, answer.”

Strong/Thayer define it as “(1) obedience, compliance, submission; (2) obedience rendered to anyone’s counsels, an obedience shown in observing the requirements of Christianity” [5218].

This word occurs 15x in the NT (Rom. 1:5; 5:19; 6:16 [2x]; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:5, 6; Phile. 21; Heb. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:2, 14, 22).

*Romans 1:5 ... 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the ***obedience** of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake, (NASB95)*

*Romans 5:19 ... 19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the ***obedience** of the One the many will be made righteous. (NASB95)*

*Romans 6:16 ... 16 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? (NASB95)*

*Romans 15:18 ... 18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the ***obedience** of the Gentiles by word and deed, (NASB95)*

*Romans 16:19 ... 19 For the report of your ***obedience** has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. (NASB95)*

*Romans 16:26 ... 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to ***obedience** of faith; (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 7:15 ... 15 His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the ***obedience** of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 10:5 ... 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the ***obedience** of Christ, (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 10:6 ... 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your ***obedience** is complete. (NASB95)*

*Philemon 21 ... 21 Having confidence in your ***obedience**, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 5:8 ... 8 Although He was a Son, He learned ***obedience** from the things which He suffered. (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 1:2 ... 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to ***obey** Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 1:14 ... 14 As ***obedient** children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 1:22 ... 22 Since you have in ***obedience** to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, (NASB95)*

Usage

As Christ was obedient to the Father (Rom. 5:18-19; Heb. 5:8), we must also obey God in order to be saved (Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:1-2).

*Romans 5:18-19 ... 18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the ***obedience** of the One the many will be made righteous. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 5:8-9 ... 8 Although He was a Son, He learned ***obedience** from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 1:1-2 ... 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to ***obey** Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (NASB95)*

Even the natural realm, the winds and waves, submitted unto Christ Jesus (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25; cf. also 17:6); similarly, unclean spirits also obeyed him (Mark 1:21-28).

*Matthew 8:23-27 ... 23 When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. 25 And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" 26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. 27 The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea ***obey** Him?" (NASB95)*

*Mark 4:35-41 ... 35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea ***obey** Him?" (NASB95)*

*Luke 8:22-25 ... 22 Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. 23 But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. 24 They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. 25 And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they ***obey** Him?" (NASB95)*

*Luke 17:5-6 ... 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would ***obey** you. (NASB95)*

*Mark 1:21-28 ... 21 They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they ***obey** Him." 28 Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. (NASB95)*

Recognizing that sin and righteousness compete for man's obedience (Rom. 6:12-18), let us hear and heed the Word of God, i.e., the Gospel of Christ (Acts 6:7; Phil. 2:12-13).

*Romans 6:12-18 ... 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you ***obey** its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 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? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you ***became** ***obedient** from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (NASB95)*

*Acts 6:7 ... 7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were ***becoming** ***obedient** to the faith. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 2:12-13 ... 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always ***obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (NASB95)*

In like manner, children must obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20), slaves, their masters (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-24; cf. Acts 12:13), and wives, their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

*Ephesians 6:1-3 ... 1 Children, ***obey** your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (NASB95)*

*Colossians 3:20 ... 20 Children, be ***obedient** to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 6:5-8 ... 5 Slaves, be ***obedient** to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. (NASB95)*

*Colossians 3:22-24 ... 22 Slaves, in all things ***obey** those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (NASB95)*

*1 Peter 3:1-6 ... 1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah ***obeyed** Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (NASB95)*

Conclusion

The consequences of rebellion are dire indeed (Rom. 10:16-21; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 3:14-15, cf. also vs. 6).

*Romans 10:16-21 ... 16 However, they did not all ***heed** the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. 18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.” 19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you.” 20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” 21 But as for Israel He says, “All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” (NASB95)*

*2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ... 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not ***obey** the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. (NASB95)*

*2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 ... 14 If anyone does not ***obey** our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (NASB95)*

2 Thessalonians 3:6 ... 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. (NASB95)

Genuine faith necessitates obedience (Rom. 1:1-6; 16:25-27; Heb. 11:8-10).

*Romans 1:1-6 ... 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the ***obedience** of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; (NASB95)*

*Romans 16:25-27 ... 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to ***obedience** of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 11:8-10 ... 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, ***obeyed** by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (NASB95)*

Following the example of those of old (Rom. 16:19; 2 Cor. 7:13-16; Phile. 21), will you not render full obedience to the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; 1 Pet. 1:14-16, 22-23)?

*Romans 16:19 ... 19 For the report of your ***obedience** has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. (NASB95)*

2 Corinthians 7:13-16 ... 13 For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. 14 For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. 15 His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the ***obedience** of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 16 I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you. (NASB95)

Philemon 21 ... 21 Having confidence in your ***obedience**, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. (NASB95)

Romans 15:18-19 ... 18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the ***obedience** of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 ... 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the ***obedience** of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your ***obedience** is complete. (NASB95)

1 Peter 1:14-16 ... 14 As ***obedient** children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (NASB95)

1 Peter 1:22-23 ... 22 Since you have in ***obedience** to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. (NASB95)