

Athletics are not only popular today, they were the source of analogies for Paul (cf. 2 Tim 2:5, 7). Christians need the athlete's discipline and must similarly follow the "rules" which God gives. Whereas athletes don't always transfer that discipline into everyday life, the Christian life is the daily life.

Israel had demonstrated a lack of discipline and a failure to follow God's commands. Having been given a second chance, would they now be obedient to the Lord's commands? In the final chapters of Exodus there are three evidences of their obedience and that their dedicated obedience led to their blessing.

I. *The construction commands are repeated nearly verbatim.*

1. This new section (Ex 36–39) adds very little, changes a few points, and leaves some out.
 - a. It adds a bit about the source of the materials.
 - b. The changes are culturally typical and appropriate for the context: commands become past tense statements and the subject changes from "you" to "he".
 - c. Only that which pertains to the construction is kept. Notes about usage are left out. Their obedience was in the area of their responsibility.
2. This type of repetition was a literary practice in the culture to show full obedience to divine commands. It was practiced during the Old Babylonian period as well as the culturally, chronologically and linguistically close Ugaritic culture.

Repetition emphasized that the workman really obeyed. They focused on their responsibility to the best of their ability. God asks of us as well to be obedient to the commands given us, serving as to the Lord.

II. *There are references to a few unique contributions, pointing again to obedience in the process.*

1. Women, who served at the tent of meeting, contributed their mirrors to make the brazen laver (38:8). Although the reason for using the mirrors and even the identity of these women remains uncertain, it is clear that they responded with willing obedience to the call for contributions. They gave in accordance with what they could (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:12).
2. The collection of metals (38:21–31) also points to their obedience in the construction process.
 - a. Gold and bronze came from wave offerings, another reminder of the obedient response to the call for willing generosity.
 - b. Silver came from the census of fighting men as regulated in Exodus 30:11–16 and reported in Numbers 1:1. (The numbers indicate that Ex 38 refers to that census. Numbers 1:1 probably reports the official acceptance of the registration process. The silver probably had been progressively paid as the census was taken over time. It was then used for the tabernacle that was completed just before the official census report.)

Moses was careful to record their detailed obedience, both in the construction and in the source of their materials. God's will must be done in God's way. Good intentions are no substitute for obedience to clear commands.

III. *The final chapter highlights explicitly how the workers obeyed the commands given to Moses and thus received blessing.*

1. Seven times in reporting the making of the priestly vestments (39:1–31) the text says it was "as the LORD commanded Moses." Three times in the summary it repeats the idea, "just as the LORD had commanded Moses" and "as the LORD had commanded." Clearly the text points to the obedience of the workers.
2. Another dimension to their obedience is less obvious. First, there is an element of amazement expressed in verse 43. "Behold! They had done it as the LORD had commanded." Second, the commands were given via Moses who had himself been shown a pattern. Cf. Exodus 25:40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Hebrews 8:5. Without having seen the heavenly pattern, the workers had reproduced it on the basis of Moses' verbal instructions and the leading of the Spirit.
3. Moses, having seen and been amazed at the work, blessed the workers. The tabernacle was a divinely pattern of worship for Israel to learn from and to point to the work of Jesus, the Messiah.

Believers should obey God, but know also that there are things which only He can do. Nevertheless He may use our obedience to accomplish them. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5–8. Some water, some plant. But God gives the increase. The increase which God gives comes through the obedience of each.

The runner runs to get the prize. The believer obeys to obtain a spiritual blessing which is eternal. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:23–27. God has redeemed the believer and given the believer a heart that wants to obey. Obedience pleases God and brings blessing that is eternal.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- What distinguishes a person that obeys out of gratitude from a person that obeys to win favor?
- What are specific ways in which you should be obeying? What might God do through and beyond your obedience?
- If you are convinced that "running" well in life will bring blessing, how will you live your life?