

Sanctified to the Obedience of Jesus Christ

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What a beautiful place this world would be if man were only obedient to God. His disobedience has filled it with sin, misery, confusion and death. Now obedience to God springs from the knowledge of Himself. A boy may obey his father from fear or duty, but how great the difference when obedience flows from the affections! We may treat our God as a stern Creator whose rigid demands must be met, or as One who holds before us a scourge, but how much more blessed when we know His heart of love, and seek to respond to Him in all our ways. An Apostle could say, "We . . . do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1: 9).

Obedience is better than sacrifice. It becomes us therefore to seek to please the Lord in our conduct by quietness and simplicity, rather than by aiming at big things in an ostentatious way. Thus we may be found walking with God like Enoch, who had the conscious witness that he pleased God. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of [or, agreeable to] Him" (2 Cor. 5: 9). We may observe how closely obedience is linked with righteousness, that leading principle which is the great moral law of the creation. God the Creator is sovereign, and in the nature of things His will must be law to the creature. His will must be right, and from this comes the big word righteousness which is so often misunderstood — a word that runs right through the Scriptures. To say obedience is right is simplicity itself, and the result is beautiful moral order; disobedience, on the contrary, is wrong, and the result is disorder and chaos.

How blessed it is to be able to look with the eye of faith on a scene of perfect moral order — a world where all things are of God and where Christ is everything. This is the resurrection world, brought into view for faith by the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, spoken of in Scripture as new creation. By virtue of the operations of God in his soul the believer belongs to that world — an entirely new order of things brought in by the One who was obedient unto death. Having his home in **that** world, with a new life and all its relationships and joys, the believer is called to the obedience of our Lord in **this** world, as stated in 1 Peter 1: 2 — an obedience which went all the way to death. It is well that we should see the difference between the two systems. A new place is given us before the face of God in richest blessing with a divinely given capacity to enjoy it and be at home in the joy of the Father's love, all of which is fitted to bring us out here as pilgrims and strangers to walk as children of light in the obedience of Jesus Christ. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5: 15)

It is well that we should get at the root of things here. Obedience is linked with the question of race. By one man sin entered into the world and all have sinned. As a result of the fall of Adam, all have inherited a fallen state which is opposed to God — is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The obedience of Jesus Christ to which we are set apart springs therefore from a new life and nature, into which we come as under the headship of the risen Christ. Christian obedience must therefore be distinguished from the obedience of the saints of the Old Testament. For although the power that produces obedience to God at any time or dispensation is always the same, namely, that of the Spirit, the circumstances, tastes, feelings and relationships that are ours today are altogether different from those of the saints of Old Testament times.

They had their line of conduct set before them in a moral code, we in a living Man. This will be clear when we recall that they lived in the period of man's probation. The race was tried, as we know, in a variety of ways, and all failed. God never leaves Himself without witness, and so He produced in certain elect vessels an answer to the revelation of the moment. We live in a day when there is not only the full revelation of God, but the perfect answer to it in a Man. In that Man there has been seen a perfect answer also to every expression of the rights of God from man in any and every dispensation: whether we take Abel, Enoch or Noah; Abraham, Moses or David. With all these, it was God with His creature in His claims as Creator. All that order of dealing has come to an end in the Cross, and now all His dealing is on the level of Christ. We as Christians are sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

It will be said that this is putting things on very high ground. Blessed are they that see and accept it thus, for it must be so if it is to be for God. We have noted the character of obedience worked out in Old Testament saints: there is also that legal obedience which marks the Pharisee, and of which a good example is seen in Saul of Tarsus (Phil. 3: 5-7). There is such a thing, too, as feigned obedience, as seen in the Gibeonites and also in 2 Sam. 22: 45, Psalm 66: 3 (margin). And, saddest of all, that compulsory obedience which is seen in men such as Balaam and also in demons (Mark 1: 27, Luke 4: 36), which will go down to the lake of fire where all that remains irreconcilable will be an eternal witness to the supremacy of God. Compared to every other character of obedience, that of our Lord must forever stand alone.

The obedience of our Lord is a delightful theme for contemplation. It went on to death. It is there, indeed, that it is seen in all its immeasurable perfection. But Scripture distinguishes between that and the path of glorious worth that led up to it. There, for the first time was a Man who never for one moment travelled outside the will of God. In this He established His right to live. Man was to live by every word of God, and in keeping the Law he would continue to live. So true was this of our Lord that He might have been here yet, that is, so far as sin, death and the curse were concerned. But He became obedient unto death. His death was for us, as we well know. He could say, "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me." "I do always those things that please Him." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." This was His delight; it was the joy of His Being. He had become Man to die, but the path that led up to it brought out all His excellences in such a way as to delight the heart of His God, fulfill prophetic Scriptures, and give a theme of praise for the redeemed of all ages. If we scrutinize such an obedience (and it is our joy and privilege to do so), we have to own it is far beyond us, while at the same time we rejoice that we are called to nothing less than the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Such a practical line of conduct amongst men would indeed produce a scene of beautiful moral order. "It is impossible," says some one: "God would have to produce a race of the same order as that blessed Man to bring it about." **That is exactly what He is doing.** He is operating in men's souls in such a way by His Spirit that they are transferred from their original standing and state in Adam to be in Christ, who is now at the right hand of God, the beginning of a new creation for God. The Gospel is sent to all for the obedience of faith with the revelation of the full purpose of God. It is the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God. It came out from the glorified Man

God thereby signifying His intention of producing a race of the same order as that Man. For this the Holy Spirit — a divine Person — is given to the believer that Christ may be formed in him. God has reached His end in the ascended One; in the risen and glorified Man we have the Model from which He is working, and the Spirit is the Worker to bring it about. It is well to see what God is doing, for how can we be right otherwise? Observe then, that the Bible is a Book describing two heads with their respective generations — Adam and Christ. We have only to read the last half of Romans 5 to see

this; and if we wish to see the distinction in moral order and character between the two we must read 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49.