

The School of Obedience

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2. The Obedience of CHRIST

'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' --Romans 5:19; 6:16.

'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' These words tell us what we owe to CHRIST. As in Adam we were made sinners, in CHRIST we are made righteous.

The words tell us, too, to what in CHRIST it is we owe our righteousness. As Adam's disobedience made us sinners, the obedience of CHRIST makes us righteous. To the obedience of CHRIST we owe everything.

Among, the treasures of our inheritance in CHRIST this is one of the richest. How many have never studied it, so as to love it and delight in it, and get the full blessing of it! May GOD, by His HOLY SPIRIT, reveal its glory, and make us partakers of its power.

You are familiar with the blessed truth of justification by faith. In the section of the Epistle to the Romans preceding our passage (3:21-5:11) Paul had taught what its ever-blessed foundation was -- the atonement of the blood of CHRIST; what its way and condition -- faith in the free grace of GOD who justifies the ungodly; and what its blessed fruits -- the bestowment of the righteousness of CHRIST, with an immediate access into the favor of GOD, and the hope of glory.

In our passage he now proceeds to unfold the deeper truth of the union with CHRIST by faith, in which justification has its root, and which makes it possible and right for GOD to accept us for His sake. Paul goes back to Adam and our union with him, with all the consequences that flowed from that union, to prove how reasonable, how perfectly natural (in the higher sense of the word) it is that those who receive CHRIST by faith, and are so united with Him, become partakers of His righteousness and His life.

It is in this argument that he specially emphasizes the contrast between the disobedience of Adam, with the condemnation and death it wrought, and the obedience of CHRIST, with the righteousness and life it brings.

As we study the place the obedience of CHRIST takes in His work for our salvation, and see in it the very root of our redemption, we shall know what place to give it in our heart and life.

'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' How was this?

There was a twofold connection between Adam and his descendants -- the judicial and the vital.

JUDICIAL AND VITAL CONNECTION

Through the judicial, the whole race, though yet unborn, came at once under the sentence of death. *'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them'* --such as little children-- *'who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.'*

This judicial relation was rooted in the vital connection. The sentence could not have come upon them, if they had not been in Adam. And the vital again became the manifestation of the judicial; each child of Adam enters life under the power of sin and death.

'By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners,' both by position subject to the curse of sin and by nature subject to its power.

'Adam... is the figure of Him who was to come,' and who is called the Second Adam, the Second Father of the race. Adam's disobedience in its effects is the exact similitude of what the obedience of CHRIST becomes to us.

When a sinner believes in CHRIST, he is united to Him, and is at once, by a judicial sentence, pronounced and accepted as righteous in GOD's sight. The judicial relationship is rooted in the vital. He has CHRIST's righteousness only by having CHRIST Himself, and being in Him. Before he knows aught of what it is to be in CHRIST, he can know himself acquitted and accepted.

But he is then led on to know the vital connection, and to understand that as real and complete as was his participation in Adam's disobedience with the death as well as the sinful nature that followed on it, is his participation in CHRIST's obedience, with both the righteousness and the obedient life and nature that come from it.

Let us see and understand this:

Through Adam's disobedience we are made sinners. The one thing GOD asked of Adam in Paradise was obedience. The one thing by which a creature can glorify GOD, or enjoy His favor and blessing, is obedience. The one cause of the power sin has got in the world, and the ruin it has wrought, is disobedience. The whole curse of sin on us is owing to disobedience imputed to us. The whole power of sin working in us, is nothing but this -- that as we receive Adam's nature, we inherit his disobedience -- we are born *'the children of disobedience.'* It is evident that

THE ONE WORK CHRIST WAS NEEDED FOR

was to remove this disobedience -- its curse, its dominion, its evil nature and workings. Disobedience was the root of all sin and misery. The first object of His salvation was to cut away the evil root, and restore man to his original destiny -- a life in obedience to his GOD.

How did CHRIST do this?

First of all, by coming as the Second Adam, to undo what the first had done. Sin had made us believe that it was a humiliation always to be seeking to know and do GOD's will. CHRIST came to show us the nobility, the blessedness, the heavenliness of obedience. When GOD gave us the robe of creaturehood to wear, we knew not that its beauty, its unspotted purity, was obedience to GOD. CHRIST came and put on that robe that He might show us how to wear it, and how with it we could enter into the presence and glory of GOD.

CHRIST came to overcome, and so bear away our disobedience, and to replace it by His own obedience on us and in us. As universal, as mighty, as all pervading as was the disobedience of Adam, yea, far more so, was to be the power of the obedience of CHRIST.

The object of CHRIST's life of obedience was threefold: (1) As an Example, to show us what true obedience was. (2) As our Surety, by His obedience to fulfill all righteousness for us. (3) As our Head, to prepare a new and obedient nature to impart to us.

So He died, too, to show us that His obedience means a readiness to obey to the uttermost, to die for GOD; that it means the vicarious endurance and atonement of the guilt of our disobedience; that it means a death to sin as an entrance to the life of GOD for Him and for us.

The disobedience of Adam, in all its possible bearings, was to be put away and replaced by the obedience of CHRIST. Judicially, by that obedience we are made righteous. Just as we were made sinners by Adam's disobedience, we are at once and completely justified and delivered from the power of sin and death: we stand before GOD as righteous men.

Vitally -- for the judicial and the vital are as inseparable as in the case of Adam -- we are made one plant with CHRIST in His death and resurrection, so that we are as truly dead to sin and alive to GOD, as He is. And the life we receive in Him is no other than a life of obedience.

Let every one of us who would know what obedience is, consider well: *It is the obedience of CHRIST that is the secret of the righteousness and salvation I find in Him.*

The obedience is the very essence of that righteousness: obedience is salvation. His obedience, first of all to be accepted, and trusted to, and rejoiced in, as covering and swallowing, up and making an end of my disobedience, is the one unchanging, never-to-be-forsaken ground of my acceptance.

And then, His obedience -- just as Adam's disobedience was the power that ruled my life, the power of death in me -- becomes the life-power of the new nature in me. Then I understand why Paul in this passage so closely links the righteousness and the life. (Romans 5:17) ***'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ'*** even here on earth. *'The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.'*

The more carefully we trace the parallel between the first and Second Adam, and see how in the

former the death and disobedience reigned in his seed equally with himself, and how both were equally transmitted, through union with him, the more will the conviction be forced upon us that the obedience of CHRIST is equally to be ours, not only by imputation, but by personal possession. It is so inseparable from Him that to receive Him and His life is to receive His obedience. When we receive the righteousness which GOD offers us so freely, it at once points us to the obedience out of which it was born, with which it is inseparably one, in which alone it can live and flourish.

See how this connection comes out in the next chapter. After having spoken of our life-union to CHRIST, Paul, for the first time in the Epistle (6:12), gives an injunction, '*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,*' and then immediately proceeds to teach how this means nothing but obedience: (6:16) '*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*'

Your relation to obedience is a practical one; you have been delivered from disobedience (Adam's and your own), and now are become servants of obedience -- and that '**unto righteousness.**' CHRIST's obedience was unto righteousness -- the righteousness which is GOD's gift to you. Your subjection to obedience is the one way in which your relation to GOD and to righteousness can be maintained. CHRIST's obedience unto righteousness is the only beginning of life for you; your obedience unto righteousness, its only continuance.

There is but one law for the head and the members. As surely as it was with Adam and his seed, disobedience and death, it is with CHRIST and his seed, obedience and life. The one bond of union, the one mark of likeness, between Adam and his seed was disobedience. The one bond of union between CHRIST and His seed, the one mark of resemblance, is obedience.

It was obedience made CHRIST the object of the Father's love (John 10:17, 18) and our Redeemer; it is Obedience Alone that can lead us in the way to dwell in that love (John 14:21, 23) and enjoy that redemption.

'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

Everything depends upon our knowledge of and participation in the obedience, as the gateway and path to the full enjoyment of the righteousness. At conversion the righteousness is given to faith, once for all, completely and forever, with but little or no knowledge of the obedience. But as the righteousness is indeed believed in and submitted to, and its full dominion over us, as '*servants of righteousness,*' sought after, it will open to us its blessed nature, as born out of obedience, and therefore ever leading us back to its divine origin.

The truer our hold of the righteousness of CHRIST, in the power of the Spirit, the more intense will be our desire to share in the obedience out of which it sprang. In this light let us

STUDY THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST,

that like Him we may live as servants of obedience unto righteousness.

1. In CHRIST this obedience was a life principle.

Obedience with Him did not mean a single act of obedience now and then, not even a series of acts, but the spirit of His whole life. *'I came... not to do Mine own will. 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.'* He had come into the world for one purpose. He only lived to carry out GOD's will. The one supreme, all-controlling power of His life was obedience.

He is willing to make it so in us. This was what He promised when He said, ***'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother'*** (Matthew 12:50).

The link in a family is a common life shared by all and a family likeness. The bond between CHRIST and us is that He and we together do the will of GOD.

2. In CHRIST this obedience was a joy. *'I delight to do Thy will, O My God.'* *'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.'*

Our food is refreshment and invigoration. The healthy man eats his bread with gladness. But food is more than enjoyment -- it is the one necessary of life. And so, doing the will of GOD was the food that CHRIST hungered after and without which He could not live, the one thing that satisfied His hunger, the one thing that refreshed and strengthened Him and made Him glad.

It was something of this David meant when he spoke of GOD's words being *'sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.'* As this is understood and accepted, obedience will become more natural to us and necessary to us, and more refreshing than our daily food.

3. In CHRIST this obedience led to a waiting on GOD's will.

GOD did not reveal all His will to CHRIST at once, but day by day, according to the circumstances of the hour. In His life of obedience there was growth and progress; the most difficult lesson came the last. Each act of obedience fitted Him for the new discovery of the Father's further command. He spake, *'Mine ears hast Thou opened... I delight to do Thy will, O My God.'*

It is as obedience becomes the passion of our life that the ears will be opened by GOD's Spirit to wait for His teaching, and we be content with nothing less than a divine guidance into the divine will for us.

4. In CHRIST this obedience was unto death.

When He spake, *'I came... not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me,'* He was ready to go all lengths in denying His own will and doing the Father's. He meant it. *'In nothing My will; at all costs GOD's will.'*

This is the obedience to which He invites and for which He empowers us. This wholehearted surrender to obedience in everything is the only true obedience, is the only power that will avail to carry us through. Would GOD that Christians could understand that nothing less than this is what brings the soul gladness and strength!

As long as there is a doubt about universal obedience, and with that a lurking sense of the possibility of failure, we lose the confidence that secures the victory. But when once we set GOD before us, as really asking full obedience, and engaging to work it, and see that we dare offer Him nothing less, we give up ourselves to the working of the divine power, which by the HOLY GHOST can master our whole life.

5. In CHRIST this obedience sprang from the deepest humility. Have this mind in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS, who emptied Himself -- who took the form of a servant -- who humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death.

It is the man who is willing for entire, self-emptying, is willing to be and live as the servant, '*servants... of obedience,*' is willing to be humbled very low before GOD and man, to whom the obedience of JESUS will unfold its heavenly beauty and its constraining power.

There may be a strong will, that secretly trusts in self, that strives for the obedience, and fails. It is as we sink low before GOD in humility, meekness, patience, and entire resignation to His will, and are willing to bow in an absolute helplessness and dependence on Him, as we turn away wholly from self, that it will be revealed to us how it is the one only duty and blessing of a creature to obey this glorious GOD!

6. In CHRIST this obedience was of faith -- in entire dependence upon GOD's strength. *'I do nothing of Myself.' 'The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.'*

The Son's unreserved surrender to the Father's will was met by the Father's unceasing and undeserved bestowment of His power working in Him.

Even so it will be with us. If we learn that our giving up our will to GOD is ever the measure of His giving His power in us, we shall see that a surrender to full obedience is nothing but a full faith that GOD will work all in us.

GOD's promises of the New Covenant all rest on this: **'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart... to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart... and thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments.'** (See Deuteronomy 30:6; 27:10; Ezekiel 36:27)

Let us, like the Son, believe that God works all in us, and we shall have the courage to yield ourselves to an unreserved obedience -- an obedience unto death. That yielding ourselves up to God will become the entrance into the blessed experience of conformity to the Son of God in His doing the Father's will, because He counted on the Father's power. Let us give our all to God. He will work His all in us.

Know ye not, that ye, made righteous by the obedience of One, are like Him and in Him servants of obedience unto righteousness? It is in the obedience of the One the obedience of the many has its root, its life, its security. Let us turn and gaze upon, and study, and believe in CHRIST, as the obedient One, as never before.

Let this be the CHRIST we receive and love, and seek to be made conformable to. As His righteousness is our one hope, let His obedience be our one desire. Let our faith in Him prove its sincerity and its confidence in God's supernatural power working in us by accepting CHRIST, the obedient One, as in very deed our life, as the CHRIST who dwells in us.

~ end of chapter 2 ~
