

LeaderLesson 10: The Obedience of Christ

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March 18, 2013

[This LeaderLesson is adapted from the book, A Life of Obedience by Andrew Murray. Since focused obedience is our 2013 theme, we will concentrate on obedience for the next several issues. This issue gives us as leaders a glimpse of the way Jesus practiced obedience, and what it means for us. Pray with me that we will learn and follow His example. – Bob Lowman, Jr.]

***For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,
so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.***

Romans 5:19

“By one man's obedience many will be made righteous.” How much we owe Jesus Christ! Here we see to what it is in Christ that we owe our righteousness. As Adam's disobedience made us prone to sin, the obedience of Christ makes possible righteousness. To the obedience of Christ we owe everything. This is one of the richest among the treasures of our inheritance in Christ. How many have never studied this truth so as to love it and delight in it and receive the full blessing of it! May God, by His Spirit, reveal its glory and make us partakers of its power.

The one thing God asked of Adam in the garden was obedience. The one thing by which a creature can glorify God or enjoy His favor and blessing is obedience. The single cause of the power of sin in the world and the ruin it has caused is disobedience. From Adam we have inherited a tendency to willfulness, to selfishness, to disobedience. The whole curse of sin on us is due to Adam's disobedience, which we, or course, have also chosen. Clearly, the one work for which we needed Christ was to remove this disobedience – its curse, dominion, evil nature, and all its workings. Disobedience is the root of all sin and misery. The first objective of His salvation was to cut away the evil root and restore man to his original destiny – a life of obedience to God.

How did Jesus do this? First, by coming as the Second Adam to undo what the first had done. Sin made us believe that it was humiliating to be always seeking to know and do God's will. Christ came to show us how noble, how blessed, how pleasing to God a life of obedience is. When God gave us the robe of creaturehood to wear, we did not know that its beauty, its unspotted purity, could only come from obedience to God. Christ came and put on that robe Himself to show us how to wear it. Christ overcame disobedience and gives us the power to replace ours with His obedience. As universal and all-prevailing as was the disobedience of Adam, greater still was the power of the obedience of Christ.

The object of Christ's life of obedience was three-fold:

1. As our **example**, to show us what true obedience was;
2. As our **guarantee**, by His obedience to fulfill all righteousness for us;
3. As our **head**, to prepare a new and obedient nature to impart to us.

And so He died to show us that full obedience is a readiness to obey to the uttermost, even to die for God. Whatever the disobedience of Adam touched, it was to be renounced and replaced by the obedience of Christ.

To know what obedience is, consider how the obedience of Christ is the secret of our righteousness and our salvation. Obedience is the very essence of that righteousness. Obedience results in our salvation. His obedience, first of all to be accepted, trusted, and rejoiced in, as covering and making an end of my disobedience, is the one unchanging, never-to-be forsaken ground of my acceptance. Then, just as Adam's disobedience was the power that ruled my life and was the power of death in me, Christ's obedience becomes the life-power of my new nature.

“By one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.” Everything depends upon our knowledge of and participation in obedience as the gateway and path to the full enjoyment of righteousness. At conversion, righteousness is given by faith once for all, completely and forever, even though there is little or no knowledge of obedience. But as this righteousness is embraced, submitted to, and sought after, its nature will be revealed to us as born out of obedience and therefore always leading us back to its divine origin. So, the more sure our grasp of the righteousness of Christ in the power of the Spirit, the more intense will be our desire to share in His obedience. Let us study the obedience of Christ so that we might live like Him as servants of obedience that results in righteousness.

In Christ this obedience is a life principle. The obedience of Jesus was not an act of obedience now and then, or even a series of acts, but the spirit of His whole life. He said in Hebrews 10:9, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He

came into the world for one purpose: He lived only to carry out God's will. The one all-controlling power of His life was obedience. He wants to make it so in us as well.

In Christ this obedience was a joy. Jesus said: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Our food is refreshment and vitality. The healthy person eats food with gladness. But food is more than enjoyment – it is a necessity of life. Doing the will of God was the food that He hungered for and without which He could not live. Jesus' example shows us that obedience can satisfy our souls. As this is understood, obedience will become more natural, even necessary to us; more refreshing even than our daily food.

In Christ, this obedience led to waiting on God's will. God did not reveal His will to Jesus at once, but day by day. In His life of obedience there was growth and progress; the most difficult lesson came last. Each act of obedience prepared Him for the new discovery of the Father's next command. As obedience becomes the passion of our life, our ears will be opened by the Spirit for His teaching one day at a time. We will be content with nothing less than God's guidance daily into His will for us, patiently trusting and obeying Him as Jesus did.

In Christ this obedience led to death. When Jesus said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30), He was ready to go to any length in denying His own will and doing the Father's. He meant it. At any cost: God's will. This is the obedience to which He calls us and for which He empowers us. This wholehearted surrender to obedience in everything is the only true obedience. Nothing less than this will bring gladness and strength. Once we see that God requires total obedience – and promises help for it – we dare offer nothing less.

In Christ this obedience sprang from the deepest humility. "Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-6 HCSB). It is the one who is willing to be emptied, to become a servant, willing to be humbled, to whom the obedience of Jesus will unfold its beauty and power. You may have a strong will that secretly trusts in self, that strives for obedience but fails. As we bow before God in humility, patience, and submission, willing to depend completely upon Him, we will see that it is our blessing and responsibility to obey Him.

In Christ this obedience was by faith – in entire dependence on God's strength. The Son's unreserved surrender to the Father's will was met by the Father's unceasing and unreserved gift of His power. And so it can be with us. Surrender to full obedience demonstrates complete faith that God will work in us. We cannot do this on our own, we cannot obey as we ought. But knowing the result of Jesus' obedience, we learn that by obeying humbly and completely, we open the door for the miraculous power of God to work in and through our lives. Let us believe that God will work in us "more than we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20), and we will have the courage to yield ourselves to unreserved obedience, even unto death.

Do you know that being made righteous by Christ's obedience makes you like Him, and in Him you are servants of obedience that leads to righteousness? In the obedience of One the obedience of many has its root, life, and security. As Jesus' righteousness is our hope, let His obedience be our model for all of life and leadership.

[Adapted from *A Life of Obedience* by Andrew Murray, chapter 2. (Bethany House, 2004)]

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