

LeaderLesson 11: The Secret of True Obedience

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[This LeaderLesson is adapted from the book, A Life of Obedience by Andrew Murray. Since focused obedience is our 2013 theme, we are spending time learning more about this necessity for Christian living. Pray with me that we will learn and follow Jesus' example during this Holy Week as we prepare for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. – Bob Lowman, Jr.]

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Hebrews 5:8

The secret of true obedience is a clear and close personal relationship with God. All our attempts to achieve full obedience will fail until we have access to His abiding fellowship. It is God's holy presence, consciously abiding with us, that keeps us from disobeying Him. Incomplete obedience is the result of a life that is lacking. To defend our life by arguments and faulty motives will only make us feel the need of a more committed life, one that is entirely under the power of God, in which place obedience becomes natural. A life of broken and spasmodic fellowship with God must be healed to make way for a full and healthy life of obedience. The secret of true obedience, then, is the return to close and continual fellowship with God.

Christ learned obedience. Why was this necessary? He needed to learn obedience so that as our great High Priest He might be made perfect. The Word explains that He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. Suffering is unnatural to us; it calls for the surrender of our will. Christ learned through suffering to give up His will to the Father at all costs. He became obedient unto death that He might become the author of our salvation. As with Him obedience was necessary to procure our salvation, so is obedience necessary for us to inherit it. Whether in His suffering on earth or in His glory in heaven, whether in Himself or in us, the heart of Christ is set upon obedience.

On earth Christ was a learner in the school of obedience; from heaven He teaches it to His disciples on earth. In a world where disobedience reigns and results in death, the restoration of obedience is in Christ's hands. In His own life and in ours He has undertaken to maintain it. He teaches and works it in us. Think about what – and how - He teaches. How much have we yielded ourselves to be students in His school of obedience? When we think of an ordinary school, the principle elements are the teacher, the textbooks, and the students. Look at these in the context of Christ's school of obedience.

The Teacher

He *learned* obedience. Now that He teaches it, He does so first and primarily by unfolding the secret of His own obedience to the Father. I said that the power of true obedience is to be found in a clear personal relationship to God. It was so also with our Lord Jesus. Of all His teaching He said, "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that this command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50). Day by day, each moment as He taught and worked, He lived, as man, in continual communication with the Father, and He received the Father's instructions as needed. Does He not say, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner...for the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:19, 22-23)? Even the words He spoke were not of Himself, but of the Father that sent Him. Everywhere He revealed dependence upon a present fellowship and operation of God, hearing and seeing what God spoke and did and showed.

Jesus always spoke of His relationship with the Father as the type and promise of our relationship to Him and to the Father through Him...Our Lord, who learned obedience by waiting every moment to see and hear the Father, has a great lesson to teach us: *It is only when, like Him, with Him, in and through Him, we continually walk with God and hear His voice that we can possibly attempt to offer God the obedience He asks.*

From the depths of His own life and experience Christ teaches us this. Pray earnestly that God might show you the futility of attempting to obey without the same strength that Christ needed. Pray for a willingness to give up everything for the joy of the Father's presence.

The Textbook

Jesus' direct communication with the Father did not take away His need of the Word. In the divine school of obedience there is only one textbook, whether for the adult or the child. In learning obedience, Jesus used the same textbook as we have. He appealed to the Word not only when He had to teach or to convince others; He needed it and He used it for

His own spiritual life and guidance. From the beginning of His public life to its close, He lived by the Word of God. "It is written" was the sword of the Spirit with which He conquered Satan. The Spirit of the Lord God was upon Him; this word of Scripture was the consciousness with which He opened His preaching of the Gospel. That the Scriptures might be fulfilled was the light by which He accepted all suffering, even giving Himself over to death. After the resurrection, He expounded to the disciples from the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. In Scripture He had found God's plan and path marked out for Him. He gave Himself to fulfill it. In the use of God's Word, He received the Father's continual and direct teaching.

In God's school of obedience, the Bible is the only textbook. By this we know the way we are to come to the Bible – with the simple desire to find God's will concerning us, and to do it. Scripture was not written to increase our knowledge, but to guide our conduct, that as people of God we might be complete, thoroughly furnished for all good works. Let us be very plan about this. We rejoice in the attention given to Bible study, but let us not be deceived. We may delight in studying the Bible, we may be enthused about the insights we gain from God's truth; and yet the practical influence for making us holy or humble, loving, patient, and ready either for service or suffering may be very small.

However we study or delight in the letter of the Word, it has no saving or sanctifying power without the Holy Spirit, who brings the power of God. It is only as the Holy Spirit teaches you as you read, only as the Gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, that you will be given, along with every command, the strength also to obey it. Every time you open your Bible, believe that just as surely as you listen to the divine, Spirit-breathed Word, so will our Father, in answer to the prayer of faith and patient waiting, give the Holy Spirit's living operation in your heart. Then the Lord Jesus will make the Book to you what it was to Him...the simple revelation of what God is going to do for you, in you, and through you.

The Student

If we consider the believer as a student in the school of obedience, we will better understand what Christ requires of us in order to do in us an effective work. The attitude of a faithful student toward a trusted teacher is one of complete submission and trust while giving as much time and attention the teacher may require. When we acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has a right to this kind of submission and trust, we can hope to experience how wonderfully He can teach us obedience like His own.

When we humbly ask Jesus to teach us how to obey God in everything, He asks us if we are ready to pay the price: to entirely and utterly deny self. It is to give up our will, our life, even to death. It is to be ready to do whatever He says. The only way to learn obedience from Christ is to give up our own will and make the doing of His will the desire and delight of our heart. Unless we take the vow of absolute obedience as we enter this class with Christ, it will be impossible to make any real progress.

The true student of a great master finds it easy to give him unwavering obedience because he trusts his teacher so implicitly. The student sacrifices his own wisdom to be guided by a higher wisdom. We need this confidence in our Lord Jesus. He came from heaven to learn obedience so that He might teach it to us. His obedience is the treasury out of which not only the debt of our past disobedience is paid, but also the grace for our present obedience is given. Just as we have trusted Him as our Savior to atone for our disobedience, let us trust Him as our Teacher to lead us out of it and into a life of practical obedience. Let us cling to Him who learned the value of obedience and who by it gave us our salvation.

[Adapted from *A Life of Obedience* by Andrew Murray, chapter 3. (Bethany House, 2004)]

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2013: A Year of
FOCUSED OBEDIENCE

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the Author and Perfecter
of our faith..." Hebrews 12:1-2

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