SPIRIT LIFE CLASSICS



THE SCHOOL OF OBEDIENCE

ANDREW MURRAY

FOREWORD BY DAVID LEE MARTIN

SCHOOL OF OBEDIENCE



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If My People...



"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

— 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Introduction



BY DAVID LEE MARTIN

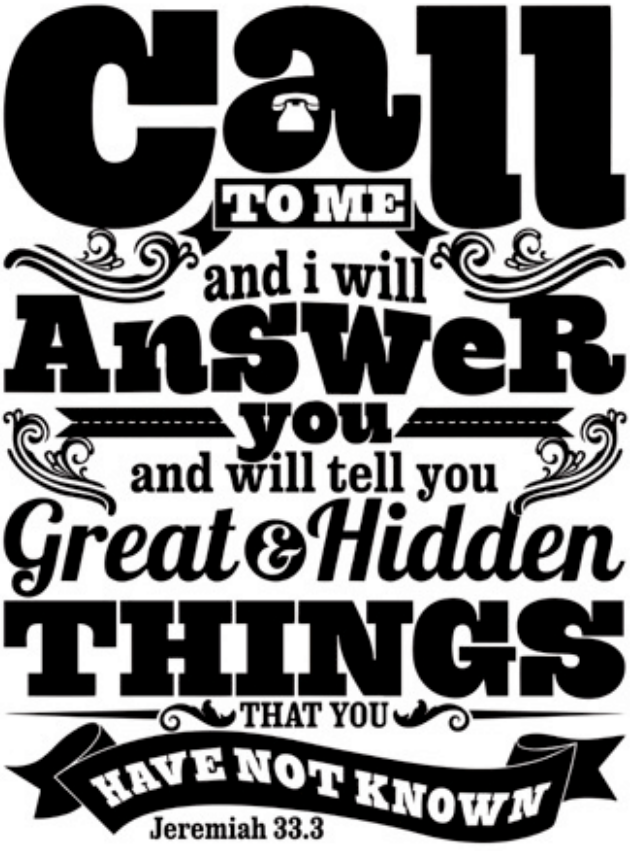
A prolific writer, and one whose words have spoken generation to generation, Andrew Murray continues to call men and women to a deeper and more abiding walk with Christ.

The depth of this firebrand minister's dedication to God's call, and his unwavering loyalty to the Savior, drip eloquently from every word he penned.

I trust that this new edition of an old classic will stir your heart in the same way it has stirred the hearts of so many before you.

In Christ's love,

David Lee Martin


Call
TO ME
and i will
AnsweR
you
and will tell you
Great & Hidden
THINGS
THAT YOU
HAVE NOT KNOWN
Jeremiah 33.3

Preface

These addresses on Obedience are issued with the very fervent prayer that it may please our gracious Father to use them for the instruction and strengthening of the young men and women, on whose obedience and devotion so much depends for the Church and the world. To all of them who read this I send my loving greeting. The God of all grace bless them abundantly!

It often happens after a Conference, or even after writing a book, that it is as if one only then begins to see the meaning and importance of the truth with which one has been occupied. So I do indeed feel as if I had utterly failed in grasping or expounding the spiritual character, the altogether indispensable necessity, the divine and actual possibility, the

inconceivable blessedness of a life of true and entire obedience to our Father in heaven. Let me, therefore, just in a few sentences gather up the main points which have come home to myself with special power, and ask every reader at starting to take note of them as some of the chief lessons to be learnt in Christ's school of obedience.

The Father in heaven asks, and requires, and actually expects, that every child of His yield Him whole-hearted and entire obedience, day by day, and all the day.

To enable His child to do this, He has made a most abundant and altogether sufficient provision in the promise of the New Covenant, and in the gift of His Son and Spirit.

This provision can alone, but can most certainly, be enjoyed, and these promises fulfilled, in the soul that gives itself up to a life in the abiding communion with the Three-One God, so that His presence and power work in it all the day.

The very entrance into this life demands the vow of absolute obedience, or the surrender of the whole being, to be, think, speak, do, every moment, nothing

but what is according to the will of God, and well-pleasing to Him.

If these things be indeed true, it is not enough to assent to them: we need the Holy Spirit to give us such a vision of their glory and divine power, and the demand they make on our immediate and unconditional submission, that there may be no rest till we accept all that God is willing to do for us.

Let us all pray that God may, by the light of His Spirit, so show His loving and almighty will concerning us, that it may be impossible for us to be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Obedience: It's Place in Holy Scripture



In undertaking the study of a Bible word, or of a truth of the Christian life, it is a great help to take a survey of the place it takes in Scripture. As we see where, and how often, and in what connections it is found, its relative importance may be apprehended as well as its bearing on the whole of revelation. Let me try in this first chapter to prepare the way for the study of what obedience is, by showing you where to go in God's Word to find the mind of God concerning it.

1. TAKE SCRIPTURE AS A WHOLE.

We begin with Paradise. In Gen. 2:16, we read: 'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying.' And

later (3:11), 'Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?'

Note how obedience to the command is the one virtue of Paradise, the one condition of man's abiding there, the one thing his Creator asks of him. Nothing is said of faith, or humility, or love: obedience includes all. As supreme as is the claim and authority of God is the demand for obedience as the one thing that is to

DECIDE HIS DESTINY.

In the life of man, to obey is the one thing needful.

Turn now from the beginning to the close of the Bible. In its last chapter you read (Rev. 22:14), 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life.' Or, if we accept the Revised Version, which gives another reading, we have the same thought in chapters 12 and 14, where we read of the seed of the woman (12:17), 'which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus'; and of the patience of the saints (14:12), 'Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.'

From beginning to end, from Paradise lost to Paradise regained, the law is unchangeable—it is only obedience that gives access to the tree of life and the favor of God.

And if you ask how the change was effected out of the disobedience at the beginning that closed the way to the tree of life, to the obedience at the end that again gained entrance to it, turn to

THAT WHICH STANDS MIDWAY

between the beginning and the end—the cross of Christ. Read a passage like Rom. 5:19, 'Through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous'; or Phil. 2:8, 'He became obedient unto death, therefore God hath highly exalted Him'; or Heb. 5:8, 9, 'He learned obedience and became the Author of salvation to them that obey Him,' and you see how the whole redemption of Christ consists in restoring obedience to its place. The beauty of His salvation consists in this, that He brings us back to the life of obedience, through which alone the creature can give the Creator the glory due to Him, or receive the glory of which his Creator desires to make him partaker.

Paradise, Calvary, Heaven, all proclaim with one voice:

'Child of God! the first and the last thing thy God asks of thee is simple, universal, unchanging obedience.'

II. LET US TURN TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Here let us specially notice how, with any new beginning in the history of God's kingdom, obedience always comes into special prominence.

1. Take Noah, the new father of the human race, and you will find four times written (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16),

'According to all that God commanded Noah, so did he.'

It is the man who does what God commands, to whom God can entrust His work, whom God can use to be a savior of men.

2. Think of Abraham, the father of the chosen race. 'By faith Abraham obeyed' (Heb. 11:7).

When he had been forty years in this school of faith-obedience, God came to perfect his faith, and to crown it with His fullest blessing. Nothing could fit

him for this but a crowning act of obedience. When he had bound his son on the altar, God came and said (Gen. 22:12, 18),

'By Myself have I sworn, in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee; and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice.'

And to Isaac He spake (26:3, 5), 'I will perform the oath which I sware to Abraham, because that Abraham obeyed my voice.'

Oh, when shall we learn how unspeakably pleasing obedience is in God's sight, and how unspeakable is the reward He bestows upon it! The way to be a blessing to the world is to be men of obedience; known by God and the world by this

ONE MARK

— a will utterly given up to God's will. Let all who profess to walk in Abraham's footsteps walk thus.

3. Go on to Moses. At Sinai, God gave him the message to the people (Ex. 19:4), 'If you will obey My voice indeed, ye shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all people.'

In the very nature of things it cannot be otherwise. God's holy will is His glory and perfection; it is only by an entrance into His will, by obedience, that it is possible to be His people.

4. Take the building of the sanctuary in which God was to dwell. In the last three chapters of Exodus you have the expression nineteen times, 'According to all the Lord commanded Moses, so did he,' And then, 'The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' Just so again in Lev. 8 and 9, you have, with reference to the consecration of the priests and the tabernacle, the same expression twelve times. And then, 'The glory of the Lord appeared before all the people, and fire came out from before the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering.'

Words cannot make it plainer, that it is amid what the obedience of His people has wrought that God delights to dwell, that it is the obedient He crowns with His favor and presence.

5. After the forty years wandering in the wilderness, and its terrible revelation of the fruit of disobedience, there was again a new beginning when the people were about to enter Canaan. Read Deuteronomy, with all Moses spoke in sight of the land, and you will find there is no book of the Bible

which uses the word 'obey' so frequently, or speaks so much of the blessing obedience will assuredly bring. The whole is summed up in the words (11:27),

'I set before you a blessing if ye obey, a curse if ye will not obey.'

Yes, 'A BLESSING IF YE OBEY'! that is the key-note of the blessed life. Canaan, just like Paradise and Heaven, can be the place of blessing as it is the place of obedience. Would God we might take it in! Do beware only of praying only for a blessing. Let us care for the obedience, God will care for the blessing. Let my one thought as a Christian be, how I can obey and please my God perfectly.

6. The next new beginning we have is in the appointment of kings in Israel. In the story of Saul we have the most solemn warning as to the need of exact and entire obedience in a man whom God is to trust as ruler of His people. Samuel had commanded Saul (1 Sam. 10:8) to wait seven days for him to come and sacrifice, and to show him what to do. When Samuel delayed (13:8-14) Saul took it upon himself to sacrifice.

When Samuel came he said: 'Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee; thy kingdom shall not continue,

because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.'

God will not honor the man who is not obedient.

Saul has a second opportunity given him of showing what is in his heart. He is sent to execute God's judgment against Amelek. He obeys. He gathers an army of two hundred thousand men, undertakes the journey into the wilderness, and destroys Amelek. But while God had commanded him 'utterly to destroy all; and not to spare,' he spared the best of the cattle and Agag.

God speaks to Samuel, 'It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he hath not performed My commandment.'

When Samuel comes, Saul twice over says, 'I have performed the commandment of the Lord;' 'I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.'

And so he had, as many would think. But his obedience had not been entire. God claims exact, full obedience. God had said, 'Utterly destroy all! spare not!' This he had not done. He had spared the best sheep for a sacrifice unto the Lord. And Samuel said.

'To obey is better than any sacrifice. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee.'

Sad type of so much obedience, which in part performs God's commandment, and yet is not the obedience God asks! God says of all sin and all disobedience: 'Utterly destroy all! spare not!' May God reveal to us whether we are indeed going all lengths with Him, seeking utterly to destroy all and spare nothing that is not in perfect harmony with His will. It is only a whole-hearted obedience, down to the minutest details, that can satisfy God. Let nothing less satisfy you; lest while we say, 'I have obeyed,' God says, 'Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord.'

7. Just one word more from the Old Testament. Next to Deuteronomy Jeremiah is the book most full of the word 'obey,' though alas! mostly in connection with the complaint that the people had not obeyed. God sums up all His dealings with the fathers in the one word,

'I spake not with them concerning sacrifices, but this thing I commanded them, OBEY MY

VOICE AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD.'

Would God that we could learn that all that God speaks of sacrifices, even of the sacrifice of His beloved Son, is subordinate to the one thing—to have His creature restored to full obedience. Into all the inconceivable meaning of the word, 'I WILL BE YOUR GOD,' there is no gateway but this, 'Obey My voice.'

III. WE COME TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Here we think at once of our blessed Lord, and the prominence He gives to obedience as the one thing for which He was come into the world. He who entered it with His 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God,' ever confessed to men, 'I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.'

Of all He did and of all He suffered, even to the death, He said, 'This commandment have I received of My Father.'

If we turn to His teaching, we find everywhere, that the obedience He rendered is what He claims from everyone who would be His disciple.

During His whole ministry, from beginning to end, obedience is

. . .

THE VERY ESSENCE OF SALVATION.

In the Sermon on the Mount He began with it: No one could enter the kingdom, 'but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.' And in the farewell discourse, how wonderfully He reveals the spiritual character of true obedience as it is born of love and inspired by it, and as it also opens the way into the love of God. Do take into your heart the wonderful words, (John 14:15, 16, 21, 23), 'If ye love Me, ye will keep my commandments. And the Father will send forth the Spirit. He hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him. If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.'

No words could express more simply or more powerfully the inconceivably glorious place Christ gives to obedience, with its twofold possibility, (1) as only possible to a loving heart, (2) as making possible all that God has to give of His Holy Spirit, of His wonderful love, of His indwelling in Christ Jesus. I know of no passage in Scripture that gives a higher revelation of the spiritual life, or the power of loving obedience as its one condition. Let us pray God very

earnestly that by His Holy Spirit its light may transfigure our daily obedience with its heavenly glory.

See how all this is confirmed in the next chapter. How well we know the parable of the vine! How often and how earnestly we have asked how to be able to abide continually in Christ We have thought of more study of the Word, more faith, more prayer, more communion with God, and we have overlooked the simple truth that Jesus teaches so clearly, 'If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love,' with its divine sanction, 'Even as I kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.'

For Him as for us, the only way under heaven to abide in divine love is to keep the commandments. Do let me ask, have you known it, have you heard it preached, have you believed it and proved it true in your experience: obedience on earth is the key to a place in God's love in heaven? Unless there be some correspondence between God's whole-hearted love in heaven, and our whole-hearted, loving obedience on earth, Christ cannot manifest Himself to us, God cannot abide in us, we cannot abide in His love.

2. If we go on from our Lord Jesus to His apostles, we find in the Acts two words of Peter's which show how

our Lord's teaching had entered into him. In the one, 'God hath given His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him,' —he proves how he knew what had been the preparation for Pentecost, the surrender to Christ. In the other, 'We must obey God rather than man' —we have the man-ward side: obedience is to be unto death; nothing on earth dare or can hinder it in the man who has given himself to God.

3. In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we have, in the opening and closing verses the expression, 'the obedience of faith among all nations' (1:5; 16:26), as that for which he was made an apostle. He speaks of what God had wrought 'to make the Gentiles obedient.' He teaches that, as the obedience of Christ makes us righteous, we become the servants of obedience unto righteousness. As disobedience in Adam and in us was the one thing that wrought death, so obedience, in Christ and in us, is the one thing that the gospel makes known as the way of restoration to God and His favor.

4. We all know how James warns us not to be hearers of the Word only but doers, and expounds how Abraham was justified, and his faith perfected, by his works.

5. In Peter's First Epistle we have only to look at the first chapter, to see the place obedience has in his system. In ver. 2 he speaks to the 'Elect, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ,' and so points us to obedience as the eternal purpose of the Father, as the great object of the work of the Spirit, and a chief part of the salvation of Christ. In ver. 13 he writes, 'As children of obedience,' born of it, marked by it, subject to it, 'be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' Obedience is

THE VERY STARTING POINT OF TRUE HOLINESS.

In ver. 22 we read, 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth,' —the whole acceptance of the truth of God was not merely a matter of intellectual assent or strong emotion: it was a subjection of the life to the dominion of the truth of God: the Christian life was in the first place obedience.

6. Of John we know how strong his statements are. 'He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar.' Obedience is

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THE ONE CERTIFICATE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

'Let us love in deed and truth; hereby we shall assure our hearts before Him. And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.' Obedience is the secret of good conscience, and of the confidence that God heareth us. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments.' The obedience that keeps His commandments: this is the garment in which the hidden, invisible love reveals itself, and whereby it is known.

Such is the place obedience has in Holy Scripture, in the mind of God, in the hearts of His servants. We may well ask, Does it take that place in my heart and life? Have we indeed given obedience that supreme place of authority over us that God means it to have, as the inspiration of every action, and of every approach to Him? If we yield ourselves to the searching of God's Spirit, we may find that we never gave it its true proportion in our scheme of life, and that this lack is the cause of all our failure in prayer and in work. We may see that the deeper blessings of

God's grace, and the full enjoyment of God's love and nearness, have been beyond our reach, simply because obedience was never made what God would have it be—the starting-point and the goal of our Christian life.

Let this, our first study, waken in us an earnest desire to know God's will fully concerning this truth. Let us unite in praying that the Holy Spirit may show us how defective the Christian's life is, where obedience does not rule all; how that life can be exchanged for one of full surrender to absolute obedience; and how sure it is that God in Christ will enable us to live it out.

The Obedience of Christ



'Through the obedience of the One shall all the many be made righteous.... Know ye not that ye are servants of obedience unto righteousness?' —Rom. 5:19; 6:16.

'Through the obedience of the One shall the 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 a 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.

'Through the 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 likeness 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. 'Through the disobedience of the one, the many were constituted 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 A 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. 'If by the trespass of one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through One,' even here on earth. 'The gift came unto 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 reign;... present yourselves unto God'; and then immediately proceeds to teach how this means nothing but obedience: 'Know ye not, that ye are servants 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 can lead us in the way to dwell in that love (John 14:21, 23) and enjoy that redemption.

'Through the obedience of the One shall the 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 My 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.'

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 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 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 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 My 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 whole-hearted 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, 'a servant 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 can do nothing of Myself.' 'The Father that dwelleth in Me 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 shall obey the Lord thy God.' 'I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments.'

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.

The Secret of True Obedience



'He learned obedience.'—Heb. 5:8.

The secret of true obedience—let me say at once what I believe it to be—is the clear and close personal relationship to God. All our attempts after full obedience will be failures until we get access to His abiding fellowship. It is God's holy presence, consciously abiding with us, that keeps us from disobeying Him.

Defective obedience is always the result of a defective life. To rouse and spur on that defective life by arguments and motives has its use, but their chief blessing must be that they make us feel the need of a different life, a life so entirely under the power of God that obedience will be its natural outcome. The defective life, the life of broken and irregular

fellowship with God, must be healed, and make way for a full and healthy life; then full obedience will become possible. The secret of a true obedience is the return to close and continual fellowship with God.

'He learned obedience' (Heb. 5:8). And why was this needful? And what is the blessing He brings us? Listen, 'He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.'

Suffering is unnatural to us, and therefore calls for the surrender of our will.

Christ needed suffering that in it He might learn to obey and give up His will to the Father at any cost. He needed to learn obedience that as our great High Priest He might be made perfect. He learned obedience, He became obedient unto death, that He might become the author of our salvation. He became the author of salvation through obedience, that He might save those 'who obey Him.'

As obedience was with Him absolutely necessary to procure, it is with us absolutely necessary to inherit, salvation. The very essence of salvation is—obedience to God. Christ as the obedient One saves us as His obedient ones. Whether in His suffering on

earth, or in His glory in heaven, whether in Himself or in us, obedience is what the heart of Christ is set upon.

On earth Christ was a learner in the school of obedience; in heaven He teaches it to His disciples here on earth. In a world where disobedience reigns unto death, the restoration of obedience is in Christ's hands. As in His own life, so in us, He has undertaken to maintain it. He teaches and works it in us.

Let us try and think what and how He teaches: it may be we shall see how little we have given ourselves to be pupils in this school, where alone obedience is to be learnt. When we think of an ordinary school, the principal things we ask often are,— (1) the teacher, (2) the class-books, (3) the pupils. Let us see what each of these is in Christ's school of obedience.

I. THE TEACHER

'He learned obedience.' And now that He teaches it, He does so first and most by unfolding the secret of His own obedience to the Father.

I have said that the power of true obedience is to be found in the clear personal relationship to God. It was so with our Lord Jesus. Of all His teaching He said, 'I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father

which sent Me gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.'

This does not mean that Christ received God's commandment in eternity as part of the Father's commission to Him on entering the world. No. Day by day, each moment as He taught and worked, He lived, as man, in continual communication with the Father, and received the Father's instructions just as He needed them. Does He not say, 'The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do; for the Father showeth the Son all things that Himself doeth; and He will show Him greater things,' 'As I hear, I judge,' 'I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me,' 'The words that I speak, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me'? It is everywhere a dependence upon a present fellowship and operation of God, a hearing and a seeing of what God speaks and does and shows.

Our Lord ever spoke of His relation to the Father as the type and the promise of our relation to Him, and to the Father through Him. With us as with Him, the life of continual obedience is impossible without continual fellowship and continual teaching. It is only

when God comes into our lives, in a degree and a power which many never consider possible, when His presence as the Eternal and Ever-present One is believed and received, even as the Son believed and received it, that there can be any hope of a life in which every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The imperative need of the continual receiving our orders and instructions from God Himself is what is implied in the words:

'OBEY MY VOICE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD.'

The expression 'obeying the commandments' is very seldom used in Scripture; it is almost always obeying Me, or obeying or hearkening to My voice. With the commander of an army, the teacher of a school, the father of a family, it is not the code of laws, however clear and good, with its rewards or threats, that secures true obedience; it is

THE PERSONAL LIVING INFLUENCE,

wakening love and enthusiasm. It is the joy of ever hearing the Father's voice that will give the joy and the strength of true obedience. It is the voice gives

power to obey the word; the word without the living voice does not avail.

How clearly this is illustrated by the contrast of what we see in Israel. The people had heard the voice of God on Sinai, and were afraid. They asked Moses that God might no more speak to them. Let Moses receive the word of God and bring it to them. They only thought of the commands; they knew not that the only power to obey is in the presence of God and His voice speaking to us. And so with only Moses to speak to them, and the tables of stone, their whole history is one of disobedience, because they were afraid of direct contact with God.

It is even so still. Many, many Christians find it so much easier to take their teaching from godly men than to wait upon God to receive it from Himself. Their faith stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God.

Do let us learn the great lesson our Lord, 'who learned obedience' by every moment waiting to see and hear the Father, has to teach us. It is only when, like Him, with Him, in and through Him, we ever walk with God, and hear His voice, that we can possibly attempt to offer God the obedience He asks and promises to work.

Out of the depths of His own life and experience, Christ can give and teach us this. Pray earnestly that God may show you the folly of attempting to obey without the same strength Christ needed, may make you willing to give up everything for the Christlike joy of the Father's presence all the day.

II. THE TEXT-BOOK.

Christ's direct communication with the Father did not render Him independent of Holy Scripture.

In the divine school of obedience there is but one text-book, whether for the Elder Brother or the younger children. In His learning obedience He used the same text-book as we have. Not only when He had to teach or to convince others did He appeal to the Word—He needed it and He used it for His own spiritual life and guidance.

From the commencement 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 is upon Me': this word of Scripture was the consciousness with which He opened His preaching of the gospel. 'That the Scripture might be fulfilled' was the light in which He accepted all suffering, and even gave Himself to the death. After the resurrection He expounded to the

disciples 'in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.'

In Scripture He had found God's plan and path for Him marked out. He gave Himself to fulfill it. It was in and with the use of God's Word that He received the Father's continual direct teaching.

In God's school of obedience the Bible is the only text-book. That shows us the disposition in which we are to come to the Bible—with the simple desire in it to find what is written concerning us as to God's will, and to do it.

Scripture was not written to increase our knowledge but to guide our conduct; 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' 'If any man will do, he shall know.' Learn from Christ to consider all there is in Scripture of the revelation of God, and His love, and His counsel, as simply auxiliary to God's great end: that the man of God may be fitted to do His will, as it is done in heaven; that man may be restored to that perfect obedience on which God's heart is set, and which alone is blessedness.

In God's school of obedience God's Word is the only text-book. To apply that Word in His own life and conduct, to know when each different portion was to

be taken up and carried out, Christ needed and received a divine teaching. It is He who speaks in Isaiah, 'The Lord God wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned; the Lord God hath opened My ear.'

Even so does He who thus learned obedience teach it us, by giving us the Holy Spirit in our heart as the divine Interpreter of the Word. This is the great work of the indwelling Holy Spirit—to draw the Word we read and think upon into our heart, and make it quick and powerful there, so that God's living Word may work effectually in our will, our love, our whole being. It is because this is not understood that the Word has no power to work obedience.

Let me try and speak very plainly about this. We rejoice in increased attention given to Bible study, and in testimonies as to the interest awakened and benefit received. But let us not deceive ourselves. We may delight in studying the Bible; we may admire and be charmed with the views we get of God's truth; the thoughts suggested may make a deep impression and waken the most pleasing religious emotions; and yet the practical influence in making us holy or humble, loving, patient, ready either for service or suffering, be very small. The one reason for this is that we do not receive the Word, as it is in very deed, as the

Word of a living God, who must Himself speak to us, and into us, if it is to exert its divine power.

The letter of the Word, however we study and delight in it, has no saving or sanctifying power. Human wisdom and human will, however strenuous their effort, cannot give, cannot command that power. The Holy Spirit is the mighty power of God: it is only as the Holy Spirit teaches you, only as the gospel is preached to you by man or by book, 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,' that it will really give you, with every command, the strength to obey, and work in you the very thing commanded.

With man, knowing and willing, knowing and doing, even willing and performing, are, for lack of power, often separate, and even at variance. Never in the Holy Spirit. He is at once the light and the might of God. All He is and does and gives has in it equally the truth and the power of God. When He shows you God's command, He always shows it you as a possible and a certain thing, a divine life and gift prepared for you, which He who shows is able to impart.

Beloved Bible students! do learn to believe that it is only when Christ, through the Holy Spirit, teaches you to understand and take the Word into your heart, that He can really teach you to obey as He did.

Do believe, every time you open your Bible, that just as sure as you listen to the divine, Spirit-breathed Word, so surely will our Father, in answer to the prayer of faith and docile waiting, give the Holy Spirit's living operation in your heart. Let all your Bible study be a thing of faith. Do not only try and believe the truths or promises you read. This may be in your own power. Before that, believe in the Holy Spirit, in His being in you, in God's working in you through Him. Take the Word into your heart, in the quiet faith that He will enable you to love it, and yield to it, and keep it; and our blessed Lord Jesus will make the book to you what it was to Him when He spoke of 'the things which are written concerning Me.' All Scripture will become the simple revelation of what God is going to do for you, and in you, and through you.

III. THE PUPIL.

We have seen how our Lord teaches us obedience by unfolding the secret of His learning it, in unceasing dependence on the Father. We have seen how He teaches us to use the Sacred Book as He used it, as a divine revelation of what God has ordained for us, with the Holy Spirit to expound and enforce. If we now consider the place the believer takes in the school of obedience as a pupil, we shall better

understand what Christ the Son requires to do His work in us effectually.

In a faithful student there are several things that go to make up his feelings towards a trusted teacher. He submits himself entirely to his leading. He reposes perfect trust in him. He gives him just as much time and attention as he asks.

When we see and consent that Jesus Christ has a right to all this, we may hope to experience how wonderfully He can teach us an obedience like His own.

1. The true pupil, say of some great musician or painter, yields his master a whole-hearted and unhesitating submission.

In practicing his scales or mixing the colors, in the slow and patient study of the elements of his art, he knows that it is wisdom simply and fully to obey.

It is this whole-hearted surrender to His guidance, this implicit submission to His authority, Christ asks. We come to Him asking Him to teach us the lost art of obeying God as He did. He asks us if we are ready to pay the price. It is entirely and utterly to deny self! It is to give up our will and our life to the death! It is to be ready to do whatever He saith!

The only way of learning to do a thing is to do it. The only way of learning obedience from Christ is to give up your will to Him, and to make the doing of His will the one desire and delight of your heart.

Unless you take the vow of absolute obedience as you enter this class of Christ's school, it will be impossible for you to make any progress.

2. The true scholar of a great master finds it easy to render him this implicit obedience, simply because he trusts him.

He gladly sacrifices his own wisdom and will to be guided by a higher.

We need this confidence in our Lord Jesus. He came from heaven to learn obedience, that He might be able to teach it well. His obedience is the treasury out of which, not only the debt of our past disobedience is paid, but out of which the grace for our present obedience is supplied. In His divine love and perfect human sympathy, in His divine power over our hearts and lives, He invites, He deserves, He wins our trust. It is by the power of a personal admiration and attachment to Himself, it is by the power of His divine love, in every deed shed into our heart by the Holy Spirit and wakening within us a responsive love, that He wakens our confidence, and

communicates to us the true secret of success in His school. As absolutely as we have trusted Him as a Savior to atone for our disobedience, so let us trust him as a Teacher to lead us out of it. Christ is our Prophet or Teacher. A heart that enthusiastically believes in His power and success as a Teacher, will, in the joy of that faith, find it possible and easy to obey. It is the presence of Christ with us all the day that will be the secret of true obedience.

3. A scholar gives his master just as much of his attendance and attention as he asks. The master fixes how much time must be devoted to personal intercourse and instruction.

Obedience to God is such a heavenly art, our nature is so utterly strange to it, the path in which the Son Himself learned it was so slow and long, that we must not wonder if it does not come at once. Nor must we wonder if it needs more time at the Masterfeet in meditation, and prayer, and waiting, in dependence and self-sacrifice, than the most are ready to give. But let us give it.

In Christ Jesus heavenly obedience has become human again, obedience has become our birth-right and our life-breath: let us cling to Him, let us believe and claim His abiding presence. With Jesus Christ

who learned obedience as our Savior, with Jesus Christ who teaches obedience as our Master, we can live lives of obedience. His obedience—we cannot study the lesson too earnestly—His obedience is our salvation; in Him, the living Christ, we find it and partake of it moment by moment.

Let us beseech God to show us how Christ and His obedience are actually to be our life every moment: that will then make us pupils who give Him all our heart and all our time. And He will teach us to keep His commandments and abide in His love, even as He kept His Father's commandments and abides in His love.

The Morning Watch in the Life of Obedience



'If the first fruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.' —Rom. 11:16.

How wonderful and blessed is the divine appointment of the first day of the week as a holy day of rest. Not, (as some think), that we might have at least one day of rest and spiritual refreshment amid the weariness of life, but that that one holy day, at the opening of the week, might sanctify the whole, might help and fit us to carry God's holy presence into all the week and its work. With the first-fruit holy, the whole lump is holy; with the root holy, all the branches are holy too.

How gracious, too, the provision suggested by so many types and examples of the Old Testament, by

which a morning hour at the opening of the day can enable us to secure a blessing for all its work, and give us the assurance of

POWER FOR VICTORY

over every temptation. How unspeakably gracious, that in the morning hour the bond that unites us with God can be so firmly tied that during hours when we have to move amid the rush of men or duties, and can scarce think of God, the soul can be kept safe and pure; that the soul can so give itself away, in the time of secret worship, into His keeping, that temptation shall only help us to unite it closer with Him. What cause for praise and joy, that the morning watch can so each day renew and strengthen the surrender to Jesus and the faith in Him, that the life of obedience can not only be maintained in fresh vigor, but can indeed go on from strength to strength.

I would fain point out how intimate and vital the connection between obedience and the morning watch is. The desire for a life of entire obedience will give new meaning and value to the morning watch, even as this again can alone give the strength and courage needed for the former.

. . .

I. THE MOTIVE PRINCIPLE.

Think first of the motive principle that will make us love and faithfully keep the morning watch.

If we take it upon us simply as a duty, and a necessary part of our religious life, it will very soon become a burden. Or, if the chief thought be our own happiness and safety, that will not supply the power to make it truly attractive. There is only one thing will suffice—the desire for fellowship with God.

It is for that we were created in God's likeness. It is that in which we hope to spend eternity. It is that alone can fit us for a true and blessed life, either here, or hereafter. To have more of God, to know Him better, to receive from Him the communication of His love and strength, to have our life filled with His, —it is for this He invites us to enter the inner chamber and shut the door.

It is in the closet, in the morning watch, that our spiritual life is both tested and strengthened. There is the battlefield where it is to be decided every day whether God is to have all, whether our life is to be absolute obedience. If we truly conquer there, getting rid of ourselves into the hands of our Almighty Lord, the victory during the day is sure. It is there, in the inner chamber, proof is to be given whether we really

delight in God, and make it our aim to love Him with our whole heart.

Let this, then, be our first lesson: the presence of God is the chief thing, in our devotions. To meet God, to give ourselves into His holy will, to know that we are pleasing to Him, to have Him give us our orders, and lay His hand upon us, and bless us, and say to us, 'Go in this thy strength' —it is when the soul learns that this is what is to be found in the morning watch, day by day, that we shall learn to long for it and delight in it.

II. READING THE BIBLE.

Let us next speak of the reading of God's Word, as part of what occupies us there. With regard to this I have more than one thing I wish to say.

1. One is that unless we beware, the Word, which is meant to point us away to God, may actually intervene and hide Him from us.

The mind may be occupied and interested and delighted at what it finds, and yet, because this is more head knowledge than anything else, it may bring little good to us. If it does not lead us to wait on God, to glorify Him, to receive His grace and

power for sweetening and sanctifying our lives, it becomes a hindrance instead of a help.

2. Another lesson that cannot be repeated too often, or pressed too urgently, is that it is only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost that we can get at the real meaning of what God means by His Word, and that the Word will really reach into our inner life, and work in us.

The Father in heaven, who gave us His Word from heaven, with its divine mysteries and message, has given us His Holy Spirit in us, to explain and internally appropriate that Word. The Father wants us each time to ask that He teach us by His Spirit. He wants us to bow in a meek, teachable frame of mind, and believe that the Spirit will, in the hidden depth of our heart, make His Word live and work. He wants us to remember that the Spirit is given us that we should be led by Him, should walk after Him, should have our whole life under His rule, and that therefore He cannot teach us in the morning unless we honestly give up ourselves to His leading. But if we do this and patiently wait on Him, not to get new thoughts but to get the power of the Word in our heart, we can count upon His teaching.

Let your closet be the classroom, let your morning watch be the study hour, in which your relation of entire dependence on, and submission to, the Holy Spirit's teaching is proved to God.

3. A third remark I want to make, in confirmation of what was said above, is this: ever study in God's Word in the spirit of an unreserved surrender to obey.

You know how often Christ, and His apostles in their Epistles, speak of hearing and not doing. If you accustom yourself to study the Bible without an earnest and very definite purpose to obey, you are getting hardened in disobedience.

Never read God's will concerning you without honestly giving up yourself to do it at once, and asking grace to do so. God has given us His Word, to tell us what He wants us to do and what grace He has provided to enable us to do it: how sad to think it a pious thing just to read that Word without any earnest effort to obey it! May God keep us from this terrible sin!

Let us make it a sacred habit to say to God, 'Lord, whatever I know to be Thy will, I will at once obey.' Ever read with a heart yielded up in willing obedience.

4. One more remark. I have here spoken of such commands as we already know, and as are easily understood. But, remember, there are a great many commands to which your attention may never have been directed, or others of which the application is so wide and unceasing that you have not taken it in. Read God's Word with a deep desire to know all His will. If there are things which appear difficult, commands which look too high, or for which you need a divine guidance to tell you how to carry them out,—and there are many such,—let them drive you to seek a divine teaching. It is not the text that is easiest and most encouraging that brings most blessing, but the text, whether easy or difficult, which throws you most upon God. God would have you 'filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding'; it is in the closet this wonderful work is to be done. Do remember, it is only when you know that God is telling you to do a thing that you feel sure He gives the strength to do it. It is only as we are willing to know all God's will that, He will from time to time reveal more of it to us, and that we, will be able to do it all.

What a power the morning watch may be in the life of one who makes a determined resolve to meet God there; to renew the surrender to absolute obedience; humbly and patiently to wait on the Holy Spirit to be

taught all God's will; and to receive the assurance that every promise given him in the Word will infallibly be made true! He that thus prays for himself, will become a true intercessor for others.

III. PRAYER.

It is in the light of these thoughts I want now to say a few words on what prayer is to be in the morning watch.

1. First of all, see that you secure the presence of God.

Do not be content with anything less than seeing the face of God, having the assurance that He is looking on you in love, and listening and working in you.

If our daily life is to be full of God, how much more the morning hour, where the life of the day alone can have God's seal stamped upon it. In our religion we want nothing so much as MORE OF GOD—His love, His will, His holiness, His Spirit living in us, His power working in us for men. Under heaven there is no way of getting this but by close personal communion. And there is no time so good for securing and practicing it, as the morning watch.

The superficiality and feebleness of our religion and religious work all come from having so little real contact with God. If it be true that God alone is the fountain of all love and good and happiness, and that to have as much as possible of His presence and His fellowship, of His will and His service, is our truest and highest happiness, surely then to meet Himself alone in the morning watch ought to be

OUR FIRST CARE.

To have had God appear to them, and speak to them, was with all the Old Testament saints the secret of their obedience and their strength. Do give God time in secret so to reveal Himself, that your soul may call the name of the place Peniel,—'for I have seen Him face to face.'

2. My next thought is: let the renewal of your surrender to absolute obedience for that day be a chief part of your morning sacrifice.

Let any confession of sin be very definite—a plucking out and cutting off of everything that has been grieving to God. Let any prayer for grace for a holy walk be as definite—an asking and accepting in faith of the very grace and strength you are specially in

need of. Let your outlook on the day you are entering on be a very determined resolve that obedience to God shall be

ITS CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE.

Do understand that there is no surer way, rather, that there is no other possible way, of getting into God's love and blessing in prayer, than by getting into His will. In prayer, give up yourself most absolutely to the blessed will of God: this will avail more than much asking. Beseech God to show you this great mercy, that He allows you, that He will enable you, to enter into His will, and abide there—that will make the knowing and doing His will in your life a blessed certainty. Let your prayer indeed be a 'morning sacrifice,' a placing yourself as a whole burnt-offering on the altar of the Lord.

The measure of surrender to full obedience will be the measure of confidence toward God.

3. Then remember that true prayer and fellowship with God cannot be all from one side.

We need to be still, to wait and hear what response God gives. This is the office of the Holy Spirit, to be the voice of God to us. In the hidden depths of the

heart, He can give a secret but most certain assurance that we are heard, that we are well-pleasing, that the Father engages to do for us what we have asked. What we need, to hear the Voice, to receive this assurance, is the quiet stillness that waits on God, the quiet faith that trusts in God, the quiet heart that bows in nothingness and humility before God, and allows Him to be all in all.

It is when God is waited on to take His part in our prayer that the confidence will come to us that we receive what we ask, that our surrender of ourselves in the sacrifice of obedience is accepted, and that therefore we can count upon the Holy Spirit to guide us into all the will of God, as He means us to know and do it.

What glory would come to us in the morning watch, and through it into our daily life, if it were thus made an hour spent with the Triune God, for the Father, through the Son and the Spirit, to take conscious possession of us for the day. How little need there then would be to urge and plead with God's children to watch the morning watch!

4. And now comes the last and the best of all. Let your prayer be intercessional, on behalf of others.

In the obedience of our Lord Jesus, as in all His fellowship with the Father, the essential element was —it was all for others. This Spirit flows through every member of the body; the more we know it, and yield to it, the more will our life be what God would make it. The highest form of prayer is intercession. The chief object for which God chose Abraham and Israel and us was to make us a blessing to the world. We are a royal priesthood—a priestly people. As long as prayer is only a means of personal improvement and happiness, we cannot know its full power. Let intercession be a real longing for the souls of those around us, a real bearing of the burden of their sin and need, a real pleading for the extension of God's kingdom, real labor in prayer for definite purposes to be realized—let such intercession be what the morning watch is consecrated to, and see what new interest and attraction it will have.

Intercession! Oh to realize what it means! To take the name, and the righteousness, and the worthiness of Christ, to put them on, and in them to appear before God! 'In Christ's stead,' now that He is no longer in the world, to beseech God, by name, for the individual men and needs, where His grace can do its work! In the faith of our own acceptance, and of the anointing with the Spirit to fit us for the work, to know that our prayer can avail to 'save a soul from

death,' can bring down and dispense the blessing of heaven upon earth! To think that in the hour of the morning watch this work can be renewed and carried on day by day, each inner chamber maintaining its own separate communication with heaven, and helping together in bringing down its share of the blessing.

It is in intercession, more than in the zeal that works in its own strength with little prayer, that the highest type of piety, the true Christlikeness is cultivated. It is in intercession that a believer rises to his true nobility in the power of imparting life and blessing. It is to intercession we must look for any large increase of the power of God in the Church and its work for men.

One word in conclusion. Turn back and think now again about

THE INTIMATE AND VITAL CONNECTION

between obedience and the morning watch.

Without obedience there cannot be the spiritual power to enter into the knowledge of God's Word and will. Without obedience there cannot be the confidence, the boldness, the liberty that knows that

it is heard. Obedience is fellowship with God in His will; without it there is not the capacity for seeing and claiming and holding the blessings He has for us.

And so, on the other side, without very definite living communion with God in the morning watch, the life of obedience cannot possibly be maintained. It is there that the vow of obedience can every morning be renewed in power and confirmed from above. It is there that the presence and fellowship can be secured which make obedience possible. It is there that in the obedience of the One, and in the union with Himself, the strength is received for all that God can ask. It is there that the spiritual understanding of God's will is received, which leads to walk worthy of the Lord to all well-pleasing.

God has called His children to live a wonderful, heavenly, altogether supernatural life. Let the morning watch each day be to you as

THE OPEN GATE OF HEAVEN,

through which its light and power streams in on your waiting heart, and from which you go out to walk with God all the day.

The Entrance to the Life of Full Obedience



'Obedient unto death.' —Phil. 2:8.

After all that has been said on the life of obedience, I purpose speaking in this address of the entrance on that life.

You might think it a mistake to take this text, in which you have obedience in its very highest perfection, as our subject in speaking of the entrance on the course. But it is no mistake. The secret of success in a race is to have the goal clearly defined, and aimed at from the very outset.

'He became obedient unto death.' There is no other Christ for any of us, no other obedience that pleases God, no other example for us to copy, no other Teacher from whom to learn to obey. Christians

suffer inconceivably because they do not at once and heartily accept this as the only obedience they are to aim at. The youngest Christian will find it a strength in the school of Christ to make nothing less from the commencement his prayer and his vow: Obedient unto Death. It is at once the beauty and the glory of Christ. A share in it is the highest blessing He has to give. The desire for and the surrender to it is possible to the youngest believer.

If you want to be reminded of what it means, think of the story in ancient history. A proud king, with a great army following him, demands the submission of the king of a small but brave nation. When the ambassadors have delivered their message, he calls one of his soldiers to stab himself. At once he does it. A second is called; he too obeys at once. A third is summoned; he too is obedient to death.

'Go and tell your master that I have three thousand such men; let him come.'

The king dared count upon men who held their life not dear to them when the king's word called for it.

It is such obedience God wants. It is such obedience Christ gave. It is such obedience He teaches. Be it such obedience and nothing less we seek to learn. From the very outset of the Christian life let this be

our aim, that we may avoid the fatal mistake of calling Christ Master and yet not doing what He says.

Let all who by these addresses have in any degree been convicted of the sin of disobedience, listen as we study from God's Word the way to escape from that and gain access to the life Christ can give—the entrance to the life of full obedience.

I. THE CONFESSION AND CLEANSING OF THE DISOBEDIENCE

It is easy to see that this must be the first step. In Jeremiah, the prophet who more than any other speaks of the disobedience of God's people, God says,

'Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; for I am merciful. Only acknowledge thine iniquity that you have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord God. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord.'

As little as there can be pardon at conversion without confession can there be, after conversion, deliverance from the overcoming power of sin and the disobedience it brings, without a new and deeper conviction and confession.

The thought of our disobedience must not be a vague generality. The special things in which we actually disobey must be definitely found out, and in confession given up and placed in the hands of Christ, and by Him cleansed away. Then only can there be the hope of entering into the way of true obedience.

Let us search our life by the light of the teaching of our Lord.

1. Christ appealed to the law.

He was not come to destroy the law, but to secure its fulfillment. To the young ruler, He said, 'Thou knowest the commandments.' Let the law be our first test.

Let us take a single sin—such as that of lying. I had a note from a young lady once saying that she wished to obey fully, and that she felt urged to confess an untruth she had told me. It was not a matter of importance, and yet she rightly judged that the confession would help her to cast it from her.

How much there is in ordinary society, how much in school life, too, that will not stand the test of strict truthfulness!

And so, there are other commandments, up to the very last, with its condemnation of all coveting and lusting after what is not ours, in which too frequently the Christian gives way to disobedience.

All this must come to a complete end. We must confess it, and in God's strength put it away forever, if there is to be any thought of our entering a life of full obedience.

2. Christ revealed the new law of love.

To be merciful as the Father in heaven, to forgive just as He does, to love enemies and to do good to them that hate us, and to live lives of self-sacrifice and beneficence,—this was the religion Jesus taught on earth.

Let us look upon an unforgiving spirit when we are provoked or ill-used, upon unloving thoughts and sharp or unkind words, upon the neglect of the call to show mercy and do good and bless, all as so much disobedience, which must be felt and mourned over and plucked out like a right eye, ere the power of a full obedience can be ours.

. . .

3. Christ spoke much of self-denial.

Self is the root of all lack of love and obedience. Our Lord called His disciple to deny himself and to take up his cross; to forsake all, to hate and lose his own life, to humble himself and become the servant of all. He did so, because self, self-will, self-pleasing, self-seeking, is simply the source of all sin.

When we indulge the flesh in such a simple thing as eating and drinking; when we gratify self by seeking or accepting or rejoicing in what indulges our pride; when self-will is allowed to assert itself, and we make provision for the fulfillment of its desire, we are guilty of disobedience to His command. This gradually clouds the soul and makes the full enjoyment of His light and peace an impossibility,

4. Christ claimed for God the love of the heart.

For Himself He equally claimed the sacrifice of all to come and follow Him. The Christian who has not definitely at heart made this his aim, who has not determined to seek for grace so to live, is guilty of disobedience. There may be much in his religion that appears good and earnest, but he cannot possibly have the joyful consciousness of knowing that he is

doing the will of his Lord, and keeping His commandments.

When the call is heard to come and now begin anew a true life of obedience, there are many who feel the desire to do so, and try quietly to slip into it. They think that by more prayer and Bible study they will grow into it—it will gradually come. They are greatly mistaken. The word God uses in Jeremiah might teach them their mistake:

'Turn, ye backsliding children, turn to Me.'

A soul that is in full earnest and has taken the vow of full obedience may grow out of a feeble obedience into a fuller one. But there is no growing out of disobedience into obedience. A turning back, a turning away, a decision, a crisis, is needed. And that only comes by the very definite insight into what has been wrong, and its confession with shame and penitence. Then alone will the soul seek for that divine and mighty cleansing from all its filthiness which prepares for the consciousness of the gift of the new heart, and God's Spirit in it causing us to walk in His statutes.

If you would hope to lead a different life, to become a man or a woman of a Christlike obedience unto death, do begin by beseeching God for the Holy

Spirit of conviction, to show you all your disobedience and to lead you in humble confession to the cleansing God has provided. Rest not till you have received it.

II. FAITH THAT OBEDIENCE IS POSSIBLE.

This is the second step. To take that step we must try and understand clearly what obedience is.

1. To this end we must attend carefully to the difference between voluntary and involuntary sin. It is with the former alone that obedience deals.

We know that the new heart which God gives His child is placed in the midst of the flesh with its sinfulness. Out of this there often arises, even in one who is walking in true obedience, evil suggestions of pride, unlovingness, impurity, over which he has no direct control. They are in their nature utterly sinful and vile; but they are not imputed to a man as acts of transgression. They are not acts of disobedience, which he can break off and cast out, as he can the disobedience of which we have spoken. The deliverance from them comes in another way, not through the will of the regenerate man, by which

obedience always comes, but through the cleansing power of the blood and the indwelling Christ. As the sinful nature rises, all he can do is to abhor it and trust in the blood that at once cleanses him and keeps him clean.

IT IS OF GREAT CONSEQUENCE

to note the distinction. It keeps the Christian from thinking obedience impossible. It encourages him to seek and offer his obedience in the sphere where it can avail. And it is just in proportion as in its own sphere the power of the will for obedience is maintained, that the power of the Spirit can be trusted and obtained to do the cleansing work in what is beyond the reach of the will.

2. When this difficulty has been removed, there is often a second one arises, to make us doubt whether obedience be indeed possible.

Men connect it with the idea of absolute perfection. They put together all the commands of the Bible; they think of all the graces these commands point to, in their highest possible measure; and they think of a man with all those graces, every moment in their full perfection, as an obedient man. How different is the

demand of the Father in heaven! He takes account of the different powers and attainments of each child of His. He asks of him only the obedience of each day, or rather, each hour at a time. He sees whether I have indeed chosen and given myself up to the whole-hearted performance of every known command. He sees whether I am really longing and learning to know and do all His will. And when His child does this, in simple faith and love, the obedience is acceptable. The Spirit gives us the sweet assurance that we are well-pleasing to Him, and enables us to 'have confidence before God, because we know that we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.'

This obedience is indeed an attainable degree of grace. The faith that it is, is indispensable to the obedient walk.

You ask for the ground of that faith in God's Word? You find it in God's New Covenant promise,

'I will write My law in their heart. I will put My fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from Me.'

The great defect of the Old Covenant was that it demanded, but did not provide, the power for obedience. This the New Covenant did. The heart means the love, the life. The law put into, written

into the heart, means that it has taken possession of the inmost life and love of the renewed man. The new heart delights in the law of God, it is willing and able to obey it.

You doubt this; your experience does not confirm it. No wonder! A promise of God is a thing of faith; you do not believe it, and so cannot experience it.

You know what invisible writing fluid is. You, write with it on paper, and nothing can be seen by a man who is not in the secret. Tell him of it, and by faith he knows it. Hold it up to the sun, or put some chemical on it, and out comes the secret writing. So God's law is written in your heart. If you believe this firmly, and come and say to God that His law is there in your inmost part, and hold up that heart to the light and heat of the Holy Spirit, you will find it true. The law written in the heart will mean to you the fervent love of God's commands, with the power to obey them.2

A story is told of one of Napoleon's soldiers. The doctor was seeking to extract a bullet that had lodged in the region of the heart, when the soldier cried,

'Cut deeper, you will find Napoleon graven there.'

Christian! do believe that the law lives in your inmost being! Speak in faith the words of David and of Christ,

'I delight to do Thy will O God! Yea, Thy law is written on my heart.'

The faith of this will assure you that obedience is possible. Such faith will help you into the life of true obedience.

III. THE STEP OUT OF DISOBEDIENCE TO OBEDIENCE IS BY SURRENDER TO CHRIST.

'Turn to Me, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding,' God said to Israel.

They were His people, but had turned from Him; the return must be immediate and entire. To turn our back upon the divided life of disobedience, and in the faith of God's grace to say 'I will obey,' may be the work of a moment.

The power for it, to take the vow and to maintain it, comes from the living Christ, 'We have said before, the power of obedience lies in the mighty influence of a living personal Presence. As long as we took our knowledge of God's will from a book or from men, we

could not but fail. If we take Jesus, in His unchanging nearness, as at once our Lord and our Strength, we can obey. The voice that commands is the voice that inspires. The eye that guides is the eye that encourages. Christ becomes all in all to us; the Master who commands the Example who teaches, the Helper who strengthens. Turn from your life of disobedience to Christ; give up yourself to Him in surrender and faith.

In surrender. Let Him have all. Give up your life to be as full of Him, of His presence, His will, His service, as He can make it. Give up yourself to Him, not to be saved from disobedience, that now you may be happy and live your own life without sinning and trouble. No; but that He may have you wholly for Himself, as a vessel, as a channel, which He can fill with Himself, with His life and love for men, and me in His blessed service.

In faith too. In a new faith. When a soul sees this new thing in Christ, the power for continual obedience, it needs a new faith to take in the special blessing of His great redemption. The faith that only understood 'He became obedient unto death' of His atonement, as a motive to love and obedience, now learns to take the word as Scripture speaks it, 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who

humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death.' It believes that Christ has put His own mind and Spirit into us, and in the faith of that, prepares to live and act it out.

God sent Christ into the world to restore obedience to its place in our heart and life, to restore man to His place in the obedience to God. Christ came, and becoming obedient unto death proved what the only true obedience is. He wrought it out, and perfected it in Himself, as a life that He won through death, and now communicates to us. The Christ who loves us, who leads and teaches and strengthens us, who lives in us, is the Christ who was obedient unto death. 'Obedient unto death' is the very essence of the life He imparts. Shall we not accept it and trust Him to manifest it in us?

Would you enter into the blessed life of obedience? See here the open gate—Christ says, 'I am the door.' See here the new and living way—Christ says, 'I am the way.'

We begin to see it; all our disobedience was owing to our not knowing Christ aright. We see it; obedience is only possible in a life of unceasing fellowship with Himself. The inspiration of His voice, the light of

His eyes, the grasp of His hand make it possible, make it certain.

Come and let us bow down, and yield ourselves to this Christ. Obedient unto death, in the faith that He makes us partakers with Himself of all He is and has.

The Obedience of Faith



'By faith Abraham obeyed.' —Heb. 11:8.

'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' He believed that there was a land of Canaan, of which God had spoken. He believed in it as a 'land of promise,' secured to him as an inheritance. He believed that God would bring him there, would show it him, and give it him. In that faith he dared go out, not knowing whither he went. In the blessed ignorance of faith he trusted God, and obeyed, and received the inheritance.

The land of promise that has been set before us is the blessed life of obedience. We have heard God's call to go out and dwell there—about that there can be no

mistake. We have heard the promise of Christ to bring us there, and to give us possession of the land—that, too, is clear and sure. We have surrendered ourselves to our Lord, and asked of our Father to make all this true in us. Our desire now is that all our life and work in it may be lifted up to the level of a holy and joyful obedience: and that through us God may make obedience the key-note of the Christian life we aim at promoting in others. Our aim is high: we can only reach it by a new inflow of the power that comes from above. It is only by a faith that gets a new vision and hold of the powers of the heavenly world, secured to us in Christ, that we can obey and obtain the promise.

As we think of all this, of cultivating in ourselves and others the conviction that we only live to please Him to serve His purposes, some are ready to say:

'This is not a land of promise we are called to enter, but a life of burden and difficulty and certain failure.'

Do not say so, my brother! God calls you indeed to a land of promise. Come and prove what He can work in you. Come and experience what the nobility is of a Christlike obedience unto death. Come and see what blessing God will give to him who, with Christ, gives himself the uttermost unto the ever-blessed and most

holy will of God. Only believe in the glory of this good land of whole-hearted obedience: in God, in who calls you to it; in Christ, who will bring you in; in the Holy Spirit, who dwells and works all there. He that believeth entereth in.

I wish, then, to speak of the obedience of faith, and of faith as the sufficient power for all obedience. I give you these five simple words as expressive of the disposition of a believing heart entering on that life in the good land:—I see it, I desire it, I expect it, I accept it, I trust Christ for it.

I. FAITH SEES IT.

We have been trying to show you the map of the land, and to indicate the most important places in that land—the points at which God meets and blesses the soul. What we need now is in faith quietly and definitely to settle the question:

Is there really such a land of promise, in which continuous obedience is certainly, is divinely possible?

As long as there is any doubt on this point, it is out of the question to go up and possess the land.

Just think of Abraham's faith. It rested in God, in His omnipotence and His faithfulness. We have put before you the promises of God. Hear another of

them: 'I will give you a new heart. and I will put My Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my judgments, and ye shall keep them.' Here is God's covenant engagement. He adds, 'I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.' He undertakes to cause and enable you to obey. In Christ and the Holy Spirit He has made the most wonderful provision for fulfilling His engagement.

Just do what Abraham did—fix your heart upon God. 'He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform.' God's omnipotence was Abraham's stay. Let it be yours. Look out on all the promises God's Word gives of a clean heart, a heart established blameless in holiness, of a life in righteousness and holiness, of a walk in all the commandments of the Lord unblameable and well-pleasing to Him, of God's working in us to will and to do, of His working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, in the simple faith: God says this; His power can do it. Let the assurance that a life of full obedience is possible, possess you. Faith can see the invisible and the impossible. Gaze on the vision until your heart says:

'It must be true. It is true. There is a life promised I have never yet known.'

II. FAITH DESIRES IT.

When I read the gospel story and see how ready the sick and the blind and the needy were to believe Christ's word, I often ask myself what it was that made them so much more ready to believe than we are. The answer I get in the Word is this, that one great difference lies in the honesty and intensity of the desire. They did indeed desire deliverance with their whole heart. There was no need of pleading with them to make them willing to take His blessing.

Alas, that it should be so different with us! All indeed wish, in a sort of way, to be better than they are. But how few there are who really 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'; how few who intensely long and cry after a life of close obedience, and the continual consciousness of being pleasing to God.

There can be no strong faith without strong desire. Desire is the great motive-power in the universe. It was God's desire to save us moved HIM to send His Son. It is desire that moves one to study and work and suffer. It is alone the desire for salvation that brings a sinner to Christ. It is the desire for God, and the closest possible fellowship with Him, the desire to be just what He would have us be, and to have as much of His will as possible, that will make the

promised land attractive to us. It is this will make us forsake everything to get our full share in the obedience of Christ.

And how can the desire be awakened?

Shame on us, that we need to ask the question; that the most desirable of all things, likeness to God in the union with His will and doing it, has so little attraction for us! Let us take it as a sign of our blindness and dullness, and beseech God to give us by His Spirit 'enlightened eyes of the heart,' that we may see and know 'the riches of the glory of our inheritance' waiting upon the life of true obedience. Let us turn and gaze, in this light of God's Spirit, and gaze again on the life as possible, as certain, as divinely secured and divinely blessed, until our faith begins to burn with desire, and to say:

'I do long to have it. With my whole heart will I seek it.'

III. FAITH EXPECTS IT.

The difference between desire and expectation is great. There is often a strong desire after salvation in a soul who has little hope of really obtaining it. It is a great step in advance when desire passes into

expectation, and the soul begins to savor spiritual blessing:

'I am sure it is for me, and, though I do not see how, I confidently expect to obtain it.'

The life of obedience is no longer an unattainable ideal held out by God, to make us strive at least to get a little nearer it, but is become a reality, meant for the life in flesh and blood here on earth. Expect it, as most certainly meant for you. Expect God to make it true.

There is much indeed to hinder this expectation. Your past failure; your unfavorable temperament or circumstances; your feeble faith; your difficulty as to what such a devotion, obedient unto death, may demand; your conscious lack of power for it; —all this makes you say:

'It may be for others; it is not for me, I fear.'

I beseech you, speak not thus. You are leaving God out of account. Expect to get it. Look up to His power and His love, and do begin to say,

'It is for me.'

Take courage from the lives of God's saints who have gone before you. Santa Teresa writes that after her

conversion she spent more than eighteen years of her life in that miserable attempt to reconcile God and her life of sin. But at last she was able to write,

'I have made a vow never to offend God in the very least matter. I have vowed that I would rather die a thousand deaths than do anything of that kind, knowing I was doing it—this was obedience unto death. I am resolved never to leave anything whatever undone that I consider still to be more perfect, and more for the honor of my Lord.'3

Gerhard Tersteegen had from his youth sought and served the Lord. After a time the sense of God's grace was withdrawn from him, and for five long years he was as one far away on the great sea, where neither sun nor stars appear. 'But my hope was in Jesus.'All at once a light broke on him that never went out, and he wrote, with blood drawn from his veins, that letter to the Lord Jesus in which he said:

'From this evening to all eternity, Thy will, not mine be done. Command and rule and reign in me. I yield up myself without reserve, and I promise, with Thy help and power, rather to give up the last drop of my blood than knowingly or willingly be untrue or disobedient to Thee.'

That was his obedience unto death.

Set your heart upon it, and expect it. The same God lives still. Set your hope on Him; He will do it.

IV. FAITH ACCEPTS IT.

To accept is more than to expect. Many wait and hope and never possess because they do not accept.

To all who have not accepted, and feel as if they were not ready to accept, we say, Expect. If the expectation be from the heart, and be set indeed upon God Himself, it will lead the soul to accept.

To all who say they do expect, we urgently say, Accept. Faith has the wondrous God-given power of saying,

'I accept, I take, I have.'

It is for the lack of this definite faith, that claims and appropriates the spiritual blessing we desire, that so many prayers appear to be fruitless. For such an act of faith all are not ready. Where there is no true conviction of the sin of disobedience, and alas! no true sorrow for it; where there is no strong longing or purpose really in everything to obey God; where there is no deep interest in the message of Holy Scripture, that God wants to 'perfect us to do His will,' by Himself 'working in us that which is pleasing in His sight,' there is not the spiritual capacity to

accept the blessing. The Christian is content to be a babe. He wants only to suck the milk of consolation. He is not able to bear the strong meat of which Jesus ate, 'doing, the will of His Father.'

And yet we come to all with the entreaty, Accept it, the grace for this wondrous new life of obedience; accept it now. Without this your act of consecration will come to little. Without this your purpose to try and be more obedient must fail. Has not God shown you that there is an entirely new position for you to take—a possible position of simple childlike obedience, day by day, to every command His voice speaks to you through the Spirit: a possible position of simple childlike dependence on and experience of His all-sufficient grace, day by day, for every command He gives?

I pray you, even now, take that position, make that surrender, take that grace. Accept and enter on the true life of faith, and the unceasing obedience of faith. As unlimited and as sure as God's promise and power are, may your faith be. As unlimited as your faith is, will your simple childlike obedience be. Oh! ask God for His aid, and accept all He has offered you.

V. FAITH TRUSTS CHRIST FOR ALL.

'All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.' It is possible that as we have spoken of the life of obedience, there have been questions and difficulties rising to which you cannot at once give answer. You may feel as if you cannot take it all in at once, or reconcile it with all the old habits of thought and speech and action. You fear you will not be able at once to bring all into subjection to this supreme all-controlling principle,

'Do everything as the will of God: do all as obedience to Him.'

To all these questions there is one answer; one deliverance from all these fears; Jesus Christ, the living Savior, knows all, and asks you to trust yourself to Him for the wisdom and the power to walk ever in the obedience of faith.

We have seen more than once how His whole redemption, as He effected it, is nothing but obedience. As He communicates it, it is still the same. He gives us the spirit of obedience as the spirit of our life. This spirit comes to us each moment through Him. He Himself keeps charge of our obedience. There is none under heaven but what He has and gives and works. He offers Himself to us as

surety for its maintenance, and asks us to trust Him for it. It is in Jesus Himself all our fears are removed, all our needs supplied, all our desires met. As He the righteous One is your righteousness, He the obedient One is your obedience.

Will you not trust Him for it? What faith sees and desires and expects and accepts, surely it dare trust Christ to give and to work.

Will you not to-day take the opportunity of giving glory to God and His Son, by trusting Jesus now to lead you into the promised land: Look up to your glorified Lord in heaven, and in His strength renew, with new meaning, your vow of allegiance, your vow never to do anything knowingly or willingly that would offend Him. Trust Him for the faith to make the vow, for the heart to keep it, for the strength to carry it out. Trust Him , the loving One, by His living presence, to secure both your faith and obedience. Trust Him, and venture to join in an act of consecration, in the assurance that He undertakes to be its Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us.

The School of Obedience



A Basket of Fragments

'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.' —John 6:12.

In this closing chapter I wish to gather up some points not yet touched upon, or not expressed with sufficient clearness, in the hope that they may help some one who has indeed enrolled himself in Christ's school of obedience.

I. ON LEARNING OBEDIENCE.

First, let me warn against a misunderstanding of the expression— 'learning obedience.'

We are apt to think that absolute obedience as a principle—obedience unto death—is a thing that can

only be gradually learned in Christ's school. This is a great and most hurtful mistake. What we have to learn, and do learn gradually, is the practice of obedience, in new and more difficult commands. But as to the principle, Christ wants us from the very entrance into His school to make the vow of entire obedience.

A little child of five can be implicitly obedient as a youth of eighteen. The difference between the two lies not in the principle, but in the nature of the work demanded. .

Though externally Christ's obedience unto death came at the end of His life, the spirit of His obedience was the same from the beginning. Whole-hearted obedience is not the end, but the beginning of our school life. The end is fitness for God's service, when obedience has placed us fully at God's disposal. A heart yielded to God in unreserved obedience is the one condition of progress in Christ's school, and of growth in the spiritual knowledge of God's will.

Young Christian! do get this matter settled at once. Remember God's rule: all for all. Give Him all: He will give you all. Consecration avails nothing unless it means presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to do nothing but the will of God. The vow of entire

obedience is the entrance fee for him who would be enrolled by no assistant teacher, but by Christ Himself, in the school of obedience.

II. OF LEARNING TO KNOW GOD'S WILL.

This unreserved surrender to obey, as it is the first condition of entering Christ's school, is the only fitness for receiving instruction as to the will of God for us.

There is a general will of God for all His children, which we can, in some measure, learn out of the Bible. But there is a special individual application of these commands—God's will concerning each of us personally, which only the Holy Spirit can teach. And He will not teach it, except to those who have taken the vow of obedience.

This is the reason why there are so many unanswered prayers for God to make known His will. Jesus said, 'If any man wills to do His Will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.' If a man's will is really set on doing God's will, that is, if his heart is given up to do, and he as a consequence does it as far as he knows it, he shall know what God has further to teach him.

It is simply what is true of every scholar with the art he studies, of every apprentice with his trade, of every man in business doing is the one condition of truly knowing. And so obedience, the doing of God's will as far as we know, and the will and the vow to do it all as He reveals it, is the spiritual organ, the capacity for receiving the true knowledge of what is God's will for each of us.

In connection with this let me press upon you three things.

1. Seek to have a deep sense of your very great ignorance of God's will, and of your impotence by any effort to know it aright.

The consciousness of ignorance lies at the root of true teachableness. 'The meek will He guide in the way' —those who humbly confess their need of teaching. Head-knowledge only gives human thoughts without power. God by His Spirit gives a living knowledge that enters the love of the heart, and works effectually.

2. Cultivate a strong faith that God will make you know wisdom in the hidden part, in the heart.

You may have known so little of this in your Christian life hitherto that the thought appears

strange. Learn that God's working, the place where He gives His life and light, is in the heart, deeper than all our thoughts. Any uncertainty about God's will makes a joyful obedience impossible. Believe most confidently that the Father is willing to make known what He wants you to do. Count upon Him for this. Expect it certainly.

3. In view of the darkness and deceitfulness of the flesh and fleshly mind, ask God very earnestly for the searching and convincing light of the Holy Spirit.

There may be many things which you have been accustomed to think lawful or allowable, which your Father wants different. To consider it settled that they are the will of God because others and you think so, may effectually shut you out from knowing God's will in other things. Bring everything, without reserve, to the judgment of the Word, explained and applied by the Holy Spirit. Wait on God to lead you to know that everything you are and do is pleasing in His sight.

III. ON OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH.

There is one of the deeper and more spiritual aspects of this truth to which I have not alluded. It is something that as a rule does not come up in the early stages of the Christian life, and yet it is needful

that every believer know what the privileges are that await him. There is an experience into which whole-hearted obedience will bring the believer, in which he will know that, as surely as with his Lord, obedience leads to death.

Let us see what this means. During our Lord's life, His resistance to sin and the world was perfect and complete. And yet His final deliverance from their temptations and His victory over their power, His obedience, was not complete until He had died to the earthly life and to sin. In that death He gave up His life in perfect helplessness into the Father's hands, waiting for Him to raise Him up. It was through death that He received the fullness of His life and glory. Through death alone, the giving up of the life He had, could obedience lead Him into the glory of God.

The believer shares with Christ in this death to sin. In regeneration he is baptized by the Holy Spirit into it. Owing to ignorance and unbelief he may know little experimentally of this entire death to sin. When the Holy Spirit reveals to him what he possesses in Christ, and he appropriates it in faith, the Spirit works in him the very same disposition which animated Christ in His death. With Christ it was an entire ceasing from His own life, a helpless committal

of His spirit into the Father's hands. This was the complete fulfillment of the Father's command: Lay down Thy life in My hands. Out of the perfect self-oblivion of the grave He entered the glory of the Father.

It is into the fellowship of this a believer is brought. He finds that in the most unreserved obedience for which God's Spirit fits him, there is still a secret element of self and self-will. He longs to be delivered from it. He is taught in God's Word that this can only be by death. The Spirit helps him to claim more fully that he is indeed dead to sin in Christ, and that the power of that death can work mightily in him. He is made willing to be obedient unto death, this entire death to self, which makes him truly nothing. In this he finds a full entrance into the life of Christ.

To see the need of this entire death to self, to be made willing for it, to be led into the entire self-emptying and humility of our Lord Jesus,—this is the highest lesson that our obedience has to learn —this is, indeed, the Christlike obedience unto death.

There is no room here to enlarge on this. I thought it well to say this much on a lesson which God Himself will, in due time, teach those who are entirely faithful.

IV. OF THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE.

In regard to the knowledge of God's will, we must see and give conscience its place, and submit to its authority.

There are a thousand little things in which the law of nature or education teaches us what is right and good, and in regard to which even earnest Christians do not hold themselves bound to obey. Now, remember, if you are unfaithful in that which is least, who will entrust you with the greater? Not God. If the voice of conscience tells you of some course of action that is the nobler or the better, and you choose another because it is easier or pleasing to self, you unfit yourself for the teaching of the Spirit, by disobeying the voice of God in nature. A strong will always to do the right, to do the very best, as conscience points it out, is a will to do God's will. Paul writes, 'I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' The Holy Ghost speaks through conscience: if you disobey and hurt conscience, you make it impossible for God to speak to you.

Obedience to God's will shows itself in tender regard for the voice of conscience. This holds good with regard to eating and drinking, sleeping and resting,

spending money and seeking pleasure,—let everything be brought into subjection to the will of God.

This leads to another thing of great importance in this connection. If you would live the life of true obedience, see that you maintain a good conscience before God, and never knowingly indulge in anything which is contrary to His mind. George Muller attributed all his happiness during seventy years to this, along with his love of God's Word. He had maintained a good conscience in all things, not going on in a course he knew to be contrary to the will of God. Conscience is the guardian or monitor God has given you, to give warning when anything goes wrong. Up to the light you have, give heed to conscience. Ask God, by the teaching of His will, to give it more light. Seek the witness of conscience that you are acting up to that light. Conscience will become your encouragement and your helper, and give you the confidence, both that your obedience is accepted, and that your prayer for ever-increasing, knowledge of the will is heard.

V. OF LEGAL AND EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE.

Even when the vow of unreserved obedience has been taken, there may still be two sorts of obedience —that of the law, and that of the gospel. Just as there are two Testaments, an Old and a New, so there are two styles of religion, two ways of serving God. This is what Paul speaks of in Romans, when he says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace' (6:14), and further speaks of our being 'freed from the law,' so 'that we serve in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter' (7:6); and then again reminds us, 'Ye received not again the spirit of bondage unto fear, but ye received the Spirit of adoption' (8:15).

The threefold contrast points very evidently to a danger existing among those Christians of still acting as if they were under the law, serving in the boldness of the letter and in the spirit of bondage. One great cause of the feebleness of so much Christian living is because it is more under law than under grace. Let us see what the difference is.

What the law demands from us, grace promises and performs for us.

The law deals with what we ought to do, whether we can or not, and by the appeal to motives of fear and love stirs us to do our utmost. But it gives no real

strength, and so only leads to failure and condemnation. Grace points to what we cannot do, and offers to do it for us and in us.

The law comes with commands on stone or in a book. Grace comes in a living, gracious Person, who gives His presence and His power.

The law promises life, if we obey. Grace gives life, even the Holy Spirit with the assurance that we can obey.

Human nature is ever prone to slip back out of grace into the law, and secretly to trust to trying and doing its utmost. The promises of grace are so divine, the gift of the Holy Spirit to do all in us is so wonderful, that few believe it. This is the reason they never dare take the vow of obedience, or, having taken it, turn back again. I beseech you, study well what gospel obedience is. The gospel is good tidings. Its obedience is part of that good tidings—that grace, by the Holy Spirit, will do all in you. Believe that, and let every undertaking to obey be in the joyous hopefulness that comes from faith in the exceeding abundance of grace, in the mighty indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in the blessed love of Jesus whose abiding presence makes obedience possible and certain.

VI. OF THE OBEDIENCE OF LOVE.

This is one of the special and most beautiful aspects of gospel obedience. The grace which promises to work all through the Holy Spirit is the gift of eternal love. The Lord Jesus (who takes charge of our obedience, teaches it, and by His presence secures it to us) is He who loved us unto the death, who loves us with a love that passeth knowledge. Nothing can receive or know love but a loving heart. And it is this loving heart that enables us to obey. Obedience is the loving response to the divine love resting on us, and the only access to a fuller enjoyment of that love.

How our Lord insisted upon that in His farewell discourse! Thrice He repeats it in John 14—'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.' 'He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me.' 'If a man love Me, he will keep My word.' Is it not clear that love alone can give the obedience Jesus asks, and receive the blessing Jesus gives to obedience? The gift of the Spirit, the Father's love and His own, with the manifestation of Himself; the Father's love and His own making their abode with us: into these, loving obedience gives the assured access.

In the next chapter He puts it from the other side, and shows how obedience leads to the enjoyment of God's love—He kept His Father's commandments,

and abides in His love. If we keep His commandments, we shall abide in His love. He proved His love by giving His life for us; we are His friends, we shall enjoy His love, if we do what He commands us. Between His first love and our love in response to it, between our love and His fuller love in response to ours, obedience is the one indispensable link. True and full obedience is impossible, except as we live and love. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.'

Do beware of a legal obedience, striving after a life of true obedience under a sense of duty. Ask God to show you the 'newness of life' which is needed for a new and full obedience. Claim the promise, 'I will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thou shalt obey the Lord thy God.' Believe in the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus. Believe in the Spirit given in you, enabling you to love, and so causing you to walk in God's statutes. In the strength of this faith, in the assurance of sufficient grace, made perfect in weakness, enter into God's love, and the life of living obedience it works. For it is nothing but the continual presence of Jesus in His love can fit you for continual obedience.

VII. IS OBEDIENCE POSSIBLE?

I close with once again, and most urgently, pressing home this question. It lies at the very root of our life. The secret, half-unconscious thought that to live always well-pleasing to God is beyond our reach, eats away the very root of our strength. I beseech you to give a definite answer to the question.

If in the light of God's provision for obedience, of His promise of working all His good pleasure in you, of His giving you a new heart, with the indwelling of His Son and Spirit, you still fear obedience is not possible, do ask God to open your eyes truly to know His will.4 If your judgment be convinced, and you assent to the truth theoretically, and yet fear to give up yourself to such a life, I say to you too, Do ask God to open your eyes and bring you to know His will for yourself. Do beware lest the secret fear of having to give up too much, of having to become too peculiar and entirely devoted to God, keep you back. Beware of seeking just religion enough to give ease to the conscience, and then not desiring to do and be and give God all He is worthy of. And beware, above all, of 'limiting' God, of making Him a liar, by refusing to believe what He has said He can and will do.

If our study in the school of obedience is to be of any profit, rest not till you have written it down—Daily

obedience to all that God wills of me is possible, is possible to me. In His strength I yield myself to Him for it.

But, remember, only on one condition. Not in the strength of your resolve or effort, but that the unceasing presence of Christ, and the unceasing teaching of the Spirit of all grace and power be your portion. Christ, the obedient One, living in you, will secure your obedience. Obedience will be to you a life of love and joy in His fellowship.

Obedience to the Last Command



'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations.' —Matt. 28:19.

'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'—Mark 16:15.

As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so send I them into the world' — John 17:18; 20:21.

'Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'—Acts 1:8.

All these words breathe nothing less than the spirit of world conquest. 'All the nations,' 'all the world,' 'every creature,' 'the uttermost parts of the earth,'—each expression indicates that the heart of Christ was set on claiming His rightful dominion over the world

He had redeemed and won for Himself. He counts on His disciples to undertake and carry out the work. As He stands at the foot of the throne, ready to ascend and reign, He tells them, 'All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth,' and points them at once to 'all the world,' to 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' as the object of His and their desire and efforts. As the King on the throne, He Himself will be their helper: 'I am with you alway.' They are to be the advance guard of His conquering hosts even to the end of the world. He Himself will carry on the war. He seeks to inspire them with His own assurance of victory, with His own purpose to make this the only thing to be thought of as worth living or dying for—the winning back of the world to its God.

Christ does not teach or argue, ask or plead: He simply commands. He has trained His disciples to obedience. He has attached them to Himself in a love that can obey. He has already breathed His own resurrection Spirit into them. He can count upon them. He dare say to them: 'Go ye into all the world.' Formerly, during His life on earth, they had more than once expressed their doubt about the possibility of fulfilling His commands. But here, as quietly and simply as He speaks these divine words, they accept them. And no sooner has He ascended than they go to the appointed place, to wait for the

equipment of a heavenly power from their Lord in heaven, for the heavenly work of making all the nations His disciples. They accepted the command and passed it on to those who through them believed on His name. And within a generation, simple men, whose names we do not even know, had preached the gospel in Antioch and Rome and the regions beyond. The command was passed on, and taken up into the heart and life, as meant for all ages, as

MEANT FOR EVERY DISCIPLE.

The command is for us, too, for each one of us. There is in the Church of Christ no privileged clan to which alone belongs the honor, nor any servile clan on which alone rests the duty, of carrying the gospel to every creature. The life Christ imparts is His own life, the spirit He breathes is His very own Spirit, the one disposition He works is His own self-sacrificing love. It lies in the very nature of His salvation that every member of His body, in full and healthy access with Him feels himself urged to impart what he has received. The command is no arbitrary law from without. It is simply the revelation, for our intelligent and voluntary consent, of the wonderful truth that we are His body, that we now occupy His place on earth, and that His will and love now carry out

through us the work He began, and that now in His stead we live to seek the Father's glory, in

WINNING A LOST WORLD BACK TO HIM.

How terribly the Church has failed in obeying the command! How many Christians there are who never knew that there is such a command! How many who hear of it, but do not in earnest set themselves to obey it! And how many who seek to obey it in such way and measure as seems to them fitting and convenient.

We have been studying what obedience is. We have professed to give ourselves up to a whole-hearted obedience. Surely we are prepared gladly to listen to anything that can help us to understand and carry out this our Lord's last and great command: the gospel to every creature.

Let me give you what I have to say under the three simple headings: Accept His command. Place yourself entirely at His disposal. Begin at once to live for His kingdom.

I. ACCEPT HIS COMMAND.

There are various things that weaken the force of this command. There is the impression that a command given to all and general in its nature is not as binding

as one that is entirely personal and specific; that if others do not their part, our share of the blame is comparatively small; that where the difficulties are very great, obedience cannot be an absolute demand; that if we are willing to do our best, this is all that can be asked of us.

Brethren! this is not obedience. This is not the spirit in which the first disciples accepted it. This is not the spirit in which we wish to live with our beloved Lord. We want to say, each one of us—If there be no one else, I, by His grace, will give myself and my life to live for His kingdom. Let me for a moment separate myself from all others, and think of my personal relation to Jesus.

I am a member of Christ's body. He expects every member to be at His disposal, to be animated by His Spirit, to live for what He is and does. It is so with my body. I carry every healthy member with me day by day, in the assurance that I can count upon it to do its part. Our Lord has taken me so truly up into His body that He can ask and expect nothing else from me. And I have so truly yielded myself to Him that there can be no idea of my wanting anything but just to know and do His will.

Or let me take the illustration of 'the Vine and the branches.' The branch has just as much only one object for its being as the vine—bearing fruit. If I really am a branch, I am just as much as He was in the world—only and wholly to bring forth fruit, to live and labor for the salvation of men.

Take still another illustration. Christ has bought me with His blood. No slave conquered by force or purchased by money was ever so entirely the property of his master, as my soul, redeemed and won by Christ's blood, given up and bound to Him by love, is His property, for Him alone to do with it what He pleases. He claims by divine right, working through the Holy Spirit in an infinite power, and I have given a full assent, that I live wholly for His kingdom and service. This is my joy and my glory.

There was a time when it was different. There are two ways in which a man can bestow his money or service on another. In olden time there was once a slave, who by his trade earned much money. All the money came to the master. The master was kind and treated the slave well. At length the slave, from earnings his master had allowed him, was able to purchase his liberty. In course of time the master became impoverished, and had to come to his former slave for help. He was not only able, but most willing

to give it, and gave liberally, in gratitude for former kindness.

You see at once the difference between the bringing of his money and service when be was a slave, and his gifts when he was free. In the former case he gave all, because it and he belonged to the master. In the latter he only gave what he chose.

In which way ought we to give to Christ Jesus? I fear many, many give as if they were free to give what they chose, what they think they can afford. The believer to whom the right which the purchase price of the blood has acquired, has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, delights to know that he is the bond slave of redeeming love, and to lay everything he has at his Master's feet, because he belongs to Him.

Have you ever wondered that the disciples accepted the great command so easily and so heartily? They came fresh from Calvary, where they had seen the blood. They had met the risen One, and He had breathed His Spirit into them. During the forty days, 'through the Holy Ghost He had given His commandments unto them.' Jesus was to them Savior, Master, Friend, and Lord. His word was with divine power; they could not but obey. Oh, let us bow at His feet, and yield to the Holy Spirit to reveal and assert

His mighty claim, and let us unhesitatingly and with the whole heart accept the command as our one life-purpose: the gospel to every creature.

II. PLACE YOURSELF AT HIS DISPOSAL.

The last great command has been so prominently urged in connection with Foreign Missions that many are inclined exclusively to confine it to them. This is a great mistake. Our Lord's words, 'Make disciples of all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' tell us what our aim is to be—nothing less than to make every man a true disciple, living in holy obedience to all Christ's will.

What a work there is to be done in our Christian churches and our so-called Christian communities ere it can be said that the command has been carried out! And what a need that the whole Church, with every believer in it, realize that to do this work is the sole object of its existence! The gospel brought fully, perseveringly, savingly to every creature: this is the mission, this ought to be the passion, of every redeemed soul. For this alone is the Spirit and likeness and life of Christ formed in you.

If there is one thing that the Church needs to preach, in the power of the Holy Ghost, it is the absolute and

immediate duty of every child of God, not only to take some part in this work, as he may think fit or possible, but to give himself to Christ the Master, to be guided and used as He would have. And therefore I say to every reader who has taken the vow of full obedience—and dare we count ourselves true Christians if we have not done so?—place yourself at once and wholly at Christ's disposal. As binding, as is the first great command on all God's people, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,' is this the last great command too— 'The gospel to every creature.' Ere you know what your work may be, ere you feel any special desire or call or fitness for any work,—if you are willing to accept the command, place yourself at His disposal. It is His as Master to train and fit and guide and use you. Fear not; come at once and forever out of the selfish religion which puts your own will and comfort first, and gives Christ what you see fit. Let the Master know that He can have you wholly. Enroll yourself at once with Him as

A VOLUNTEER FOR HIS SERVICE.

God has in these few past years filled our hearts with joy and thanksgiving at what He has done through the Student Volunteer Movement. The blessing it is bringing the Christian Church is as great as that coming to the heathen world. I sometimes feel as if

there were only one thing still needed to perfect its work. Is there not a need of an enrollment of Volunteers for Home Service, helping its members to feel that as intense and undivided as is the consecration to which the Volunteer for foreign work is stirred and helped is the devotion Christ asks of every one, whom He has bought with His blood, for His service in saving the world? What blessings have not these simple words, 'It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary,' brought into thousands of lives! It helped them into the surrender of obedience to the great command, and became an era in their history. What blessings might not come to many who can never go abroad, or who think so, because they have not asked their Master's will, if they could take the simple resolve By the grace of God I devote my life wholly to the service of Christ's kingdom! The external forsaking of home and going abroad is often a great help to the foreign volunteer, through the struggle it costs him, and the breaking away from all that could hinder him. The home volunteer may have to abide in his calling, and not have the need of such an external separation—he needs all the more the help which a pledge, given in secret, or in union with others, can bring. The blessed Spirit can make it a crisis and a consecration that leads to a life utterly devoted to God.

Students in the school of obedience study the last and great commandment well. Accept it with your whole heart. Place yourselves entirely at His disposal.

III. AND BEGIN AT ONCE TO ACT ON YOUR OBEDIENCE.

In whatever circumstances you are, it is your privilege to have within reach souls that can be won for God. All around you there are numberless forms of Christian activity which invite your help and offer you theirs. Look upon yourself as redeemed by Christ for His service, as blessed with His Spirit to give you the very dispositions that were in Himself, and take up, humbly but boldly, your life calling, to take part in the great work of winning back the world to God. Whether you are led of God to join some of the many agencies already at work, or to walk in a more solitary path, remember not to regard the work as that of your church, or society, or as your own but as the Lord's. Cherish carefully the consciousness of 'doing it unto the Lord,' of being a servant who is under orders, and simply carrying them out; your work will then not, as so often, come between you and the fellowship with Christ, but link you inseparably to Him, His strength, and His approval.

It is so easy to get so engrossed in the human interest there is in our work, that its spiritual character, the supernatural power needed for it, the direct working of God in us and through us, all that can fill us with true heavenly joy and hope is lost out of sight. Keep your eye on your Master, on your King, on His throne. Ere He gave the command, and pointed His servants to the great field of the world. He first drew their eyes to Himself on the throne: 'All power is given Me in heaven and on earth.' It is the vision, the faith, of Christ on the throne that reminds of the need, that assures us of the sufficiency of His divine power. Obey, not a command, but the living Almighty Lord of Glory; faith in Him will give you heavenly strength.

These words preceded the command, and then there followed, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' It is not only Christ on the throne—glorious vision!—that we need, but Christ with us here below, in His abiding presence, Himself working for us and through us. Christ's power in heaven, Christ's presence on earth—between these two pillar promises lies the gate through which the Church enters to the conquest of the world. Let each of us follow our Leader, receive from Himself our orders as to our share in the work, and never falter in the vow of obedience that has

given itself to live wholly for His will and His work alone.

Such a beginning will be a training time, preparing us fully to know and follow His leading. If His call for the millions of dying heathen come to us, we shall be ready to go. If His providence does not permit our going, our devotion at home will be as complete and intense as if we had gone. Whether it be at home or abroad, if only the ranks of the obedient, the servants of obedience, the obedient unto earth, are filled up, Christ shall have His heart's desire, and His glorious thought—the gospel to every creature—find its accomplishment!

Blessed Son of God! Here I am. By Thy grace, I give my life to the carrying out of Thy last great command. Let my heart be as Thy heart. Let my weakness be as Thy strength. In Thy name I take the vow of entire and everlasting obedience. Amen.

NOTE ON THE MORNING WATCH

'By, the observance of the morning watch is commonly meant the spending of at least the first half-hour of every day alone with God, in personal devotional Bible study and prayer.

'There are Christians who say that they do not have time to devote a full half-hour to such a spiritual exercise. It is a striking fact that the busiest Christians constitute the class who plead this excuse the least, and most generally observe the morning watch. Any Christian who will honestly and persistently follow this plan for a month or two will become convinced that it is the best possible use of his time, that it does not interfere with his regular work, and that it promotes the wisest economy of time....

'In India, in China, in Japan, hundreds of students have agreed to keep the morning watch....

'The practical question for each of us is, Why should not I keep the morning watch? Next to receiving Christ as Savior, and claiming the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves and to others than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch.'

These quotations are from an address by John R. Mott. At first sight the closing statement appears too strong. But think a moment, what such a revelation implies.

It means the deep conviction that the only way to maintain and carry out the surrender to Christ and the Holy Spirit, is by meeting God very definitely at the commencement of each day, and receiving from Himself the grace needed for a walk in holy obedience.

It means an insight into the folly of attempting to live a heavenly life without rising up into close communion with God in heaven, and receiving from Himself the fresh bestowal of spiritual blessings.

It means the confession that it is alone in personal fellowship with God, and in delight in His nearness, that proof can be given that our love responds to His, and that we count His nearness our chief joy.

It means the faith that if time enough be given for God to lay His hands on us, and renew the inflowings of His Spirit, our soul may be so closely united to Him that no trials or duties can separate us from Him.

It means a purpose to live wholly and only for God, and by the sacrifice of time and ease to prove that we are willing to pay any price to secure the first of all blessings the presence of God for all the day.

Let us now look again at that sentence—, 'Next to receiving Christ as our Savior, and claiming the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves or to others than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch.' If our acceptance of Christ as Lord and Master was whole-hearted, if our prayer for and claiming of the Holy Spirit to guide and control was sincere, surely there can be no thought of not giving God each day sufficient time, our very best time, for receiving and increasing in us

what is indispensable to a life for Christ's glory and in His service.

You tell me there are many Christians who are content with ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. There are, but you will certainly not as a rule find them strong Christians. And the Students' Movement is pleading with God, above everything, that He would meet to train a race of devoted, whole-hearted young men and women. Christ asked great sacrifices of His disciples; He has perhaps asked little of you as yet. But now He allows, He invites, He longs for you to make some. Sacrifices make strong men. Sacrifices help wonderfully to wrench us away from earth and self-pleasing, and lift us heavenward. Do not try to pare down the time limit of the morning watch to less than the half-hour. There can be no question about the possibility of finding the time. Ten minutes from sleep, ten from company or amusement, ten from lessons. How easy where the heart is right, hungering to know God and His will perfectly!

If you feel that you do not feel the need of so much time, and know not how to wait, we are content you should speak of your quiet time, or your hour of prayer. God may graciously, later on, draw you out to the morning watch. But do not undertake it unless

you feel your heart stirred with the determination to make a sacrifice, and have full time for intimate intercourse with God. But if you are ready to do this, we urge you to join. The very fact of setting apart such a period helps to awaken the feeling: I have a great work to do, and I need time for it. It strengthens in your heart the conviction: If I am to be kept all this day without sin I must have time to get near to God. It will give your Bible study new point, as you find time, between the reading, to be still and bow in humility for the Holy Spirit's hidden working, and wait till you get some real apprehension of God's will for you, through the Word. And, by the grace of God, it may help you to begin that habit of specific and definite intercession of which the Church so surely stands In need.

Students! you know not whether in your future life your time may be more limited, your circumstances more unfavorable, your Christian earnestness feebler. Now is the accepted time. Today, as the Holy Ghost saith. Listen to the invitation of your brethren in all lands, and fear not to form an undiscourageable resolution to spend at least half an hour each morning with God alone.



About Andrew Murray



Andrew Murray (9 May 1828 – 18 January 1917) was a South African writer, teacher and Christian pastor. Murray considered missions to be "the chief end of the church". Murray pastored churches in Bloemfontein, Worcester, Cape Town and Wellington, all in South Africa. He was a champion of the South African Revival of 1860. Through his writings, Murray was also a key Higher Life or Keswick leader, and his theology of faith healing and belief in the continuation of the apostolic gifts made him a significant forerunner of the Pentecostal movement.