

Obedience in Suffering

Hebrews 5:1-10

Introduction

Last week I mentioned that obedience is an act of faith. I said that it doesn't matter what it is. When we do what God tells us to do, we show the world and God that we have faith. Conversely, when we disobey God, it shows our lack of faith. This is why Bonhoeffer could say (as we mentioned before), *only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes*. It is also why James said *faith without works is dead* (**James 2:26**). Today we want to explore obedience and disobedience, faith, and faithlessness.

Disobedience of Man

We don't know how long Adam and Eve had lived in Eden before the fall. But it's telling to note that the first recorded act of man was one of disobedience. After God had gone to all the trouble of creating a world where man could live, provided for his every need, and given him a mate, the first thing we see him do is turn his back on the Lord. But you say, "Did Adam really stop believing in God?" Satan planted the seed of doubt in Eve's mind: "*Did God actually say ...*" (**Genesis 3:2**). She could have noticed something was wrong with talking to a snake and cut the conversation off, but she answered, giving the devil a chance to press the issue: "*You will not surely die*" (**3:3**). She believed Satan's lie and acted on it. Adam blindly followed suit. They lost their innocence and gained the sinful nature because they doubted God and acted on their doubt.

Inconsistent Obedience

Obedience to God is tough. Even men of faith found it impossible to be consistent in their obedience. Look at Abraham. He left his family without question when God called him (**Genesis 12:1-4**). He showed he was willing to sacrifice his only son (**Genesis 22**). God required some hard things of him, and he came through. Yet, twice, out of fear for his life, he passed his wife off as his sister (**Genesis 12:10-13; 20:1-2**). He and Sarah got impatient, and she tried to "help God out" by giving her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham to have a son by him (**Genesis 16**). This shows that we aren't perfect. God is perfect and demands perfection. What are we to do?

Obedience of Christ

The writer of **Hebrews** says that Christ *learned obedience through what He suffered* (**Hebrews 5:8**). This doesn't mean he learned how to obey. He was always obedient. The act of Incarnation was an act of obedience. From the first story we read about Jesus as a child in the temple (**Luke 2:41-51**) to the end of His life when He committed His spirit to the Father (**Luke 23:46**), Jesus always obeyed. In the garden, He learned that prayers aren't always answered in the affirmative. **Hebrews** says He was *heard because of His reverence* (**v. 7**). He was heard but the answer to the request to let this cup pass was "no."

Lessons from Christ's Obedience

Along with the realization that Christ's perfect obedience was necessary for Him to be the perfect Sacrifice, we learn two things from His obedience in Gethsemane.

The Only Way

This scene answers the world's claim that there are multiple paths to salvation. In essence, Jesus was saying, "Father, if there's a Plan B to save these people that doesn't involve me going to the cross, let's use it." Since He went to the cross, it's obvious there is no "Plan B." Why would a loving God kill His Son if it weren't necessary? Jesus **is** the only Way.

Handling "No"

We've all heard of people who lost their faith when they prayed for something and got "no" for an answer. They either say they hate God, or that He must not exist. Jesus shows us the right way to pray. *"Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done"* (**Luke 22:42**). Often, when we pray for relief from suffering, instead of God taking away the suffering, He gives us the strength to get through it. That is, if we're open to His will and receptive of His answer. We can get through it based on the strength of the perfect Obedient One, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Means of Grace

This is why, in Communion, we say that our faith is strengthened when we receive the body and blood of Jesus. He strengthens our faith so we can obey Him. And obedience is the sign of faith. And like Jesus, we can learn **OBEDIENCE IN SUFFERING**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
