

The Treasure of Obedience

Romans 5:12-19

Introduction

What is obedience? Obedience is an act of love. If you love someone, you want to please them. The best way to please them is to obey them, to do what they want you to do. Adam and Eve had a choice, and it was a simple one. They could show their love for God and obey Him and not eat the fruit, or they could show their love for themselves by eating the fruit. They put themselves first and that sin was passed on to all their offspring. Since the fall, people live to please themselves, we put ourselves first. Obedience is something that is foreign to us. Every evil in the world can be traced to self-seeking and ignoring or using others. We have become so myopic that we can't see beyond ourselves. What's the answer?

If only ...

How can we make things right? If only there were some way to get everyone to understand that all we need to do is start thinking about the other person. If only we lead by example and start reaching out to other people in need, maybe others will see the benefits of this and get on the bandwagon. If only our government leaders started really caring about other people, maybe the rest of society would begin, too. And if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

Helpless and Hopeless

I'm afraid it goes much deeper than what we do or even what we think. Original sin messes us up to the very core. Luther said this about original sin: *It is a nausea toward the good, a loathing of light and wisdom, and a delight in error and darkness, a flight from and an abomination of all good works, a pursuit of evil (LW 25:299)*. Because of Adam's disobedience, we are disobedient to the core. There is nothing we can do about it. We are helpless and hopeless.

Obedience of Christ

But there is help for us. There is hope. It's found in the obedience of Jesus Christ. ***The Explanation of the Small Catechism*** divides the obedience of Christ into two parts—*active* and *passive*.

Active Obedience

Christ had to be true man in order to act in our place under the Law and fulfill it for us (Explanation, p. 125). His active obedience was living a holy life, never sinning once. He was only able to do this because, unlike us, He was not stuck in original sin. Being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, He was not encumbered with original sin. So, he could, and did live a life free of sin.

Passive Obedience

Because He was true man, this meant that He was *able to suffer and die for our guilt because we failed to keep the Law (Explanation, p. 126)*. His passive obedience refers to His death on the cross. As Paul says in ***Philippians 2: And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient***

to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). So, the obedience of Christ that saves us is His living a holy life and dying a holy death.

Saved by His Passive Obedience

But how does that obedience help us? Christ wasn't just a man. He was, and is, also true God. the death of a mere man, no matter how good and perfect, would have been meaningless. *No man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life (Psalm 49:7)*. But, because He is God, *His fulfilling the Law, His life, suffering and death, are a sufficient ransom for all people (Explanation, p. 126)*. And because He is God, by His death, He *overcame sin, death, and the devil for us (Explanation, p. 127)*. As the writer of Hebrews says: *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14)*.

Whoever Believes

So, Christ died for all and offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all. So, why is there so much sin in the world? It's our fault. Jesus says in **John 3:16**, *"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* Notice: God sent His Son for the whole world, but only those who believe in Him receive forgiveness and eternal life.

The Treasure

We receive faith, the ability to believe through the Word, as Paul says in **Romans 10**: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17)*. We experience His death as we receive the gift of forgiveness every time we receive His body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Christ's obedience has removed the curse of Adam's disobedience. Through His righteous obedience, we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him.

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