

The Obedience of Jesus

Lest we think that obeying the Word of God is not important, let's take a few paragraphs to consider the obedience of our Master and Guide, Jesus Christ. Peter said that Jesus left an example, "that ye should follow his steps." (I Peter 2:21). What type of pattern did He establish while in the flesh regarding obedience to the will of the Father?

Note at the outset that Jesus had a mindset of obedience. In His youth, He advised His mother that He had to "be about my Father's business." (Luke 2:49). Later He declared, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4). That He lived for obedience is evident in His statement, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish the work." (John 4:34). John 6:38 records the Lord saying, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." When He came into the final days of His fleshly walk prior to His crucifixion, He was able to say to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4). On the cross, with the life rapidly leaving His body, He said, "It is finished." (John 19:30).

Not only did Jesus have a mind focused on obedience, He obeyed regardless of the consequences meted out by his fellow man. We're all familiar with the abuse that Jesus experienced at the hands of those who opposed Him. Isaiah's familiar words of prophecy succinctly summed up the suffering the Christ would endure when he wrote that He would be "despised and rejected of men," and be "wounded," "bruised" and chastised (Isaiah 53:3-5). Rather than discourage Him in His commitment to obey the Father's will, these persecutions steeled the Lord's determination to obey. Paul wrote, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9).

How vital is it for us to understand and appreciate the obedience of Jesus? Paul wrote, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19). Had Jesus not obeyed, He would not have been a sacrifice sufficient to bear the sins of mankind. He would have been like the high priests of the Law of Moses who needed offerings to be made for themselves as well as for the people of Israel (Hebrews 5:3). Instead, because of His obedience, Jesus was able to offer the perfect sacrifice that can once and for all take away sins (Hebrews 10:10-14).

How important is it for us to be obedient to God? In light of the example of Jesus, it seems far-fetched indeed to even imagine that the Lord is not concerned about our obedience. Beyond Jesus' example, though, the eternal significance of obeying God is clearly seen in II Thessalonians 1:7-9. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." According to this passage, non-obedience leads to eternal damnation.

There are many who try to play "law" and "grace" against each other, as though the two are diametrically opposed and cannot co-exist. Because we are under grace, the argument goes, there is not a law for us to follow. Or course, Paul spoke of being under the law to Christ (I Corinthians 9:21), but apparently that doesn't hold much weight with some folks. There is a law for us to follow. There are rules by which we are to be governed. There are commands by which to abide. There is the one true God who must be obeyed. Jesus obeyed Him while He was here in the flesh. Why should we think that we are above the necessity of obedience to the Lord?

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