

IMITATE CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE

18 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. ²Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often resorted there with his disciples. ³So Judas came to the grove, guiding a band of soldiers along with some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Jesus, knowing all that was about to happen to him, went forward and asked them, For whom are you looking? ⁵They replied, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am he. Now Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When he said to them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground. ⁷Again he asked them, For whom are you looking? They replied, Jesus of Nazareth. ⁸Jesus answered, I told you that I am he; therefore, since you are looking for me, let these others go their way. ⁹He said this so that the word which he had previously spoken might be fulfilled, "I did not lose one of all those whom you have given me." ¹⁰Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. Now the servant's name was Malchus. ¹¹But Jesus commanded Peter, Put the sword back into its sheath. This is the cup that the Father has given me, shall I not drink it? ¹²So the band of soldiers together with the chief captain and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him. ¹³They first brought him to Annas; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be to their advantage if one man should die on behalf of the people. (Jn. 18:1-14)

Introduction

Doug's wife, Lorraine, was very committed to the Pro-Life Movement. She went to work for Human Life Services, counseling young girls who were unexpectedly and undesirably pregnant.

In early June of 1987 Lorraine herself became pregnant. She and Doug were ecstatic and began to plan for their future family. Then Lorraine developed a cough; at first neither she nor Doug paid much attention to it. But the cough persisted. Eventually, Lorraine had to quit her job.

Then one day her throat began to constrict and she could not stop coughing; she had to be rushed to the hospital. The attending physician said he thought Lorraine had cancer. Both Doug and Lorraine responded with shock and disbelief; but the preliminary diagnosis was verified. Lorraine, indeed, did have cancer.

The oncologist advised an immediate abortion. "There's no way you can obtain adequate treatment," he said. "There can be no chemotherapy without an abortion. The cancer is inoperable."

"No," was Lorraine's firm response.

Predictably, the cancer spread. September, October, November passed; then, in early December labor pains began. Doug rushed Lorraine to the hospital. That night Lorraine could not breathe and began to hemorrhage. Doug did not comprehend what was happening as he was ushered from the hospital room. Some time later he was permitted to return to the room, where he stood alone over the lifeless body of his wife, Lorraine. A nurse stepped to his side, gently took him by the arm, and said, "Doug, come to the nursery and meet your son."

Today Doug says, "It is my joy to watch my son grow, and wonder at how much he looks like the unique woman who sacrificed her own life that her son might live." (*POWER*, 5/12/91, pp. 2-ff.)

In the passage of Scripture presently before us we see our Lord Jesus Christ Himself voluntarily sacrificing His life in obedience to His Father's will so that we might live.

We must appreciate the fact that in obediently submitting to His Father's will, our Lord Jesus Christ not only secured our redemption, He also provided us with an example to be imitated, as the Apostle Peter asserts:

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example ... ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1Pet. 2:21,24)

As Christians, we have been redeemed by Christ's obedient submission to the Father's will in order that we may now imitate that same type of obedience in our own lives.

I. Imitate Christ's Obedience, Even Though It May Be Painful

According to verse 4, Jesus, "***knowing all that was about to happen to him,***" went forward to meet His captors and surrender Himself to them.

Take note of Jesus' absolute commitment to His Father's will. On a previous occasion, when the multitude sought to seize Him in order to make Him king, Jesus withdrew into the hills,

Now when the people saw the sign he had performed, they said, Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world. ¹⁵Jesus, perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force in order to make him king, withdrew again into the hills by himself. (Jn. 6:14-15)

Jesus did so in order that the Father's purpose, namely, that He offer Himself up as the sacrifice of atonement on the cross of Calvary, might not be thwarted. Now, when an armed band comes to seize Him in order to crucify Him, He boldly steps forward to meet them and surrender Himself to them, knowing this to be His

Father's will, and the hour has come for Him to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice on behalf of all those who believe in Him.

Jesus, **knowing** all the things that were about to happen to Him, went forward to meet His captors and surrender Himself to them. He was about to be abandoned by all of His disciples; at the time of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*all the disciples deserted him and fled*" (Matt. 26:56b.) He was about to be denied by the chief of His apostles; when confronted for the third time with the charge that he was one of Jesus' disciples, Peter "*began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, I do not know the man!*" (Matt. 26:74.) He was about to go through the injustice of a mock trial, as reported in the Gospel of Matthew: "*The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death*" (Matt. 26:59.) He was about to be rejected by His own people in favor of a revolutionary and murderer

Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? ... ²¹ Barabbas, they answered. (Matt. 27:15-17,21)

He was about to hear a bloodthirsty, uncontrollable mob cry out for His crucifixion:

What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ? Pilate asked. They all answered, Crucify him! ²³Why? What crime has he committed? asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, Crucify him! ²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. I am innocent of this man's blood, he said. It is your responsibility! ²⁵All the people answered, Let his blood be on us and on our children! (Matt. 27:22-25)

He was about to be mocked, spat upon, struck, and whipped by a band of cruel and heartless Roman soldiers:

Then [Pilate] released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus scourged, and handed him over to be crucified. ²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. Hail, king of the Jews! they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Matt. 27:26-31)

He was about to undergo the excruciatingly painful death of the cross. He was about to undergo the shameful humiliation of being condemned like a criminal and being left to die in the company of two criminals: *“Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left”* (Matt. 27:38.) He was about to undergo the disgrace of being ridiculed and mocked by His vicious enemies:

Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God! ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²He saved others, they said, but he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. (Matt. 27:39-44)

But worst of all, He was about to undergo the experience of hell itself—the awful experience of being cut off from the loving fellowship of God His Father and being exposed to the Father’s holy indignation and righteous wrath:

At the sixth hour [of the day] darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴Then at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?—which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mk. 15:33-34)

Jesus, **knowing** all the things that were about to happen to Him, went forward to meet His captors and surrender Himself to them—because it was His Father’s will.

As Christians, we are called to imitate Christ in obeying the heavenly Father, even though it may be painful. Our call to obedience may not be as dramatic as the obedience rendered by Lorraine; it cannot be as intense as the obedience rendered by our Savior; but like that of Lorraine and like that of our Savior, it will involve a denial of our natural inclinations of self-preservation and the putting to death of our own will in favor of accepting the heavenly Father’s will. Our call to obedience may involve being subjected to injustice, to misunderstanding, to rejection and contempt, to mocking, to humiliation, to cruel taunting, to vicious hatred, to physical violence, but it will **never** involve separation from the fellowship of our heavenly Father. On the contrary, it is precisely as we submit to our heavenly Father’s will that we most fully experience His presence and His communion.

II. Imitate Christ’s Obedience, Because It Is Unavoidable

According to verses 4-5, Jesus went forward and identified Himself to the hostile mob. He inquired, *“For whom are you looking?”* They replied, *“Jesus of Nazareth.”*

In response, Jesus declared, *"I AM [he]."* In His reply Jesus was doing far more than merely identifying Himself as Jesus of Nazareth. He was declaring, "I am the LORD—Jehovah! I am none other than the God who appeared to Moses when, on that occasion, I identified Myself as the great I AM." To appreciate the full import of Jesus' declaration, note Exodus 3:14, *"God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM;' and he said, 'This is what you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'"* In His response to the multitude that came out to seize Him, Jesus was in effect saying to them, "You say that you are seeking Jesus of Nazareth. Do you realize the true identify of Jesus of Nazareth? Do you know with whom you are dealing? I am Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus of Nazareth is none other than the LORD God incarnate!"

Thus it was that Jesus went *"forward"* and identified Himself to the hostile mob; and they went *"backward,"* falling to the ground (vs. 6.) When the LORD God asserts Himself and reveals Himself, His enemies are scattered; note, for example, the testimony of Isaiah, *"O Jehovah ... when you lift yourself up the nations are scattered"* (Isa. 33:2-3.)

Here, also, is a revelation of the holy power and authority of righteousness, as it is displayed by none other than the Holy One of God Himself:

Observe ... all the commandments I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess ...²²If you carefully observe all these commandments that I am giving you to follow—to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him— ...²⁵No man will be able to stand against you. Jehovah your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go. (Deut. 11:8,22,25)

Thus Jesus went *"forward"* and identified Himself to the hostile multitude; and they went *"backwards,"* falling to the ground. At this point Simon Peter was emboldened to draw his sword to rout this hapless band of soldiers (vs. 10.) But Jesus restrained him (vs. 11,) note, also, Matthew 26:52-54, where the Lord Jesus rebukes him with the words,

Put your sword back in its place, Jesus said to him, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way? (Matt. 26:52-54)

On the one hand, if Jesus had desired to save His own life He could easily have done so. All that was about to happen to Him was preventable—in the sense that it was within His power to prevent it. But, on the other hand, if Jesus was to fulfill the purpose for which the Father sent Him into the world, all that was about to happen to Him was unavoidable—it was absolutely necessary. In the Garden of

Gethsemane, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”* (Matt. 26:39.) With the knowledge that the cross of Calvary was an unavoidable necessity if He was to faithfully do His Father’s will, our Lord testified to Peter, *“Put your sword back in its place ... ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”* (Matt. 26:52-54.)

Thus Jesus went *“forward,”* and surrendered Himself to His hapless enemies, in order that He might go to the cross to pay for our sins, to redeem us from the punishment and tyranny of sin, so that we, by virtue of our relationship with Him, might render obedience unto God and live a righteous life before God.

As Christians, we are called to imitate Christ in obeying the Father, because such obedience is unavoidable. On the contrary, it is one of the great purposes for which we have been saved, so that the righteous law of God might be fulfilled in us unto the glory of God:

*... God [sent] his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴**in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us**—us who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-4)*

It is by grace that you have been saved through faith—and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹it is not of works, therefore no one can boast. ¹⁰We are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance in order for us to walk in them. (Eph. 2:8-10)

... you are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people [appointed to be God’s] own possession, so that you might display the virtues of him” who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not any longer be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve the will of God—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:1-2)

III. Imitate Christ’s Obedience, Because of Your Love for the Father

Jesus explains to Peter that He shall surrender Himself to His captors and undergo all that lies before Him because this is the cup the Father has given Him to drink (vs. 11.) Jesus will surrender Himself to all that lies before Him because it comes from the Father’s hand—because it is the Father’s will—as such, He cannot and will not refuse it.

Our Lord Jesus describes His devotion to His Father as the very essence of His life: *“My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”* (Jn. 4:34.) Jesus testifies that it is impossible for Him to set His will against that of His Father: *“I tell you the truth, The Son can do nothing by himself, but [only] what he sees the Father doing; for whatever [the Father] does, the Son also does in the same way”* (Jn. 5:19.) The Son cannot act independently of the Father because it is against His very nature and character to do so; out of love for the Father, He is in complete submission to the Father.

As Christians, we are called to imitate Christ in obeying the Father, because of our love for the Father and our devotion to Him.

Conclusion

We must appreciate the fact that by obediently submitting to the Father’s will, our Lord Jesus Christ not only secured our redemption, He also provided us with an example to be imitated; bear in mind again the teaching of the Apostle Peter:

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example ... ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1Pet. 2:21,24)

As Christians, we have been redeemed by Christ’s obedient submission to the Father’s will, in order that we may now imitate that same type of obedience in our own lives—and by the grace of God may we do so.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, also fortify yourselves with the same attitude, because he who suffered in the flesh is done with sin. ²As a result, he does not live the remainder of his earthly life for evil human desires, but for the will of God. (1 Pet. 4:1-2)