

Sermon on Obedience is Door-opener for Blessing

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Bible Text:

Philippians 2:5-11 ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Introduction

British historian E.H. Carr said, "You cannot look forward intelligently into the future unless you are also prepared to look back attentively into the past." In his old age Solomon did a review of sorts, looking attentively into his past in order to leave his parting wisdom for future generations. He documented his historical review in the book of Ecclesiastes and at the end of the book issued a terse but powerful advice for future generations concerning the root cause of lack of blessedness and unanswered prayers. He said, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

I found the following account of an obedience test that Arabian horses undergo before they are sold for lots of money:

Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses, and test them to see if they are completely trained. The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to do without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience, stop. They turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience he gives them a signal to go back to drink. (Author Unknown)

This is obedience under trying tempting circumstances. After passing this tough obedience test the horse receives special treatment and earns great reward for its owners.

Through obedience to God we also earn great blessing as stated in Deuteronomy 5:29, “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” This point is emphasized in Solomon’s advice in Proverbs 22:4, “Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.”

2 Obedience is love, worship of God which then induces God’s fellowship

As I have already stated, Solomon observed with his great wisdom in his old age that “The whole duty of man is obedience to God” (Ecclesiastes 12:13 paraphrased.) Let me make the following observations about obedience:

- Since obedience is the whole duty of man, therefore, obedience is the highest form of worship.
- Jesus said in John 14:23a, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” From this we see that obedience is love in its purest form.
- Obedience to God is actualized through obedience to God-appointed people! This is shown in Joshua 11:15, “As the LORD commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.”
- You have not shown true obedience until you have had the opportunity to disobey. You will not say you will never steal tithes from the offering bowl unless you have been placed in the Finance Committee and did not steal tithes. The horses in our example could never have been declared as obedience until they had an opportunity to disobey when they were extremely thirsty.

- Jesus said in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” From this we see that obedience induces God to fellowship with you, which is the ultimate blessing.

3 Obedience results from submission which arises out of humility

If you obey the National Superintendent then you have not done much because you have always known him as an Apostle. But if one of the youth becomes pastor-in-charge in five years and you obey him then you have shown much obedience. Such obedience requires true humility, which leads to submission. Submission then allows you to obey the person you have submitted to. We state this principle as follows:

- **Humility** leads to Submission.
- **Submission** leads to obedience.
- **Obedience** opens the door for **blessing**, which is power for living

The opposite of this principle is also true:

- **Pride**, in the negative sense, is lack of humility. Such pride is defined as “an excessively high opinion of yourself.” Pride prevents submission, that is, it leads to arrogance.
- **Arrogance** leads to disobedience. Disobedience in its intense form is rebellion.
- **Rebellion** is a sin that is likened to the sin of witchcraft and idolatry and therefore incurs divine **curse** and induces satanic fraternization.

Jesus’ life proves the principle and Satan’s life proves the opposite of the principle.

4 Satan was the inventor of rebellion arising out of arrogance

Satan’s lack of humility prevented him from submitting to God, which led to rebellion – the ultimate form of disobedience. Satan’s pride led to arrogance (lack of submission to God) as he said he will ascend to heaven, raise his throne above the stars of God, sit enthroned on the mount of assembly and make himself like the Most High. (See Isaiah 14:13-14)

The arrogance of Satan led to Rebellion as stated below:

Revelation 12:7-9 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Consequently, Satan received a curse for his rebellion:

Isaiah 14:11-12 All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

From these we observe that rebellious people are laden with maggots and worms and are separated from God – which is spiritual death. Satan was the first in what I call, the Hall of Disobedience. Satan was the first to display lack of humility (pride). He was the first to not submit or be arrogant. He was the first to rebel, which is an intense form of disobedience.

5 Jesus’ ultimate humility, submission and obedience earned him the utmost blessing

Jesus’ humility was in not equating himself to God. This enabled him to submit to God by taking on the nature of a human being and a servant as stated in Philippians 2:5-7, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

Making yourself nothing is the essence of humility. It is you that considers yourself nothing; it is not for someone else to disrespect you by considering you as nothing! In 2005, when we took our daughter to college in Washington, DC, as we stood by the roadside, a Mercedes sports car came to park. The black man got out and began to cross the street walking as if the world belonged to him. I pointed this out to my wife who had noticed what was going on. My wife then said to me “if it wasn’t for Christ you would also be like that!”

Jesus' submission to become a common earthling enabled him to be obedient to yield to the common fate of earthlings – death. “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8)

Because of his ultimate and unique obedience he received the singular and greatest blessing of all time: “God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

6 Conclusion

Obedience is love and the purest form of worship of God which then induces God's fellowship. Obedience results from submission which arises out of humility. Satan was the inventor of rebellion arising out of arrogance. On the other hand Jesus' ultimate humility, submission and obedience earned him the utmost blessing – he was exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above every name!

Be an obedient person in general because it shows your Christ-likeness. Obey your leaders, parents, teachers, husband, and wife. A consistently disobedient person generally exhibits the devilish characteristics.