

Hebrews 5:5-10

Obedience Begetting Obedience

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. (vv. 8,9).

The first 4 verses of the chapter make reference to Aaron's priesthood and teach us a number of things about the priesthood in general. Priests were to be taken from among men and their ministries were to be for men in things pertaining to God. They were to be compassionate on the ignorant, remembering that they too were compassed with infirmity. They were to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins remembering to offer for themselves as well as for the people for they not only shared a common humanity with those they represented but a common depravity as well. And the office of priest was such that no man could take the honor unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

In verses 5-10 we find Christ's office of priest described and in that description we see some things that He had in common with Aaron but we also see things that cause Christ to stand out from Aaron. Like Aaron, Christ was taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God. Like Aaron, Christ did not take the office to Himself. *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest* we read in v. 5 *but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.* It was His Father that called Him to this office. The calling of Christ to the priesthood becomes a point of emphasis when we read again in v. 10 *Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

But above and beyond Aaron we can say of Christ that *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered* (v. 8). There is tremendous condescension in this statement. Underscore those two words *though* and *yet*. *Though he were a Son*. As the Son of God He, of course, knew all things. As the Son of God He could think it not robbery to be equal with God. He possessed high authority. And yet He condescended to learn obedience and the meaning of such a statement is not that there was something He didn't know. As the Son He was and is omniscient. But He learned in the sense of learning by experience what it was to render obedience to His Father even when that obedience required suffering.

I like the words of one commentator who notes: It cannot be supposed that he did not know what obedience was; or that he was indisposed to obey God before he suffered; or that he had, as we have, perversities of nature, leading to rebellion, which required to be subdued by suffering; —but that he was willing to test the power of obedience in sufferings; to become personally and practically acquainted with the nature of such obedience in the midst of protracted woes. (Albert Barnes)

This is what sets Him apart from Aaron and from the Aaronic priesthood. This learning obedience through suffering is what makes Him unique and sets Him apart from all others. And would you notice what is accomplished by His obedience as it's stated in v. 9 *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*

Here again it's important to understand the meaning of the phrase *Being made perfect*. It would be wrong to assume that He was ever anything less than perfect. The meaning of the statement is that He became a perfect Savior – One that was perfectly fitted in all respects to redeem sinful men.

Now there's something I want you to see from vv. 8 & 9 that show us the practical application of these verses. V. 8 makes reference to Christ's obedience. *He learned obedience by the things which he suffered*. V. 9 makes reference to the obedience of His followers. It's our obedience that's in view when we read in v. 9 *he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*.

On the surface of it a person ungrounded in the gospel could come away with the misimpression that salvation is by works – by the works of our obedience. Such a notion is, of course, contrary to the gospel which tells us *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*. (Eph. 2:8,9).

But as Calvin and others point out, the obedience of v. 9 speaks of faith. That is the issue in this epistle – persevering in the faith – and not just any faith but faith that brings forth fruit in our lives – hence the phrase you hear theologians use: *the obedience of faith*. Faith is likened to obedience and unbelief is likened to disobedience. Where faith has been wrought by the Spirit of God there will follow a desire for obedience and a striving for obedience. There will never follow the notion that such desires and strivings merit heaven for us. Faith disowns self-righteousness and embraces Christ's righteousness.

Note from v. 8 that it was Christ's obedience that led to Him becoming a perfect Savior and that led to Him becoming the author of eternal salvation. He is the meritorious cause for our salvation. What I want you to see from this reference to Christ's obedience which is followed by a reference to them that obey Him is the simple truth that:

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And that's what I want to focus on this morning – how Christ's obedience leads to our obedience. Note again the emphasis on obedience in vv. 8,9 *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*.

Would you notice with me first of all that obedience begets obedience:

I. By Instructing Us to Aim for God's Glory

Our obedience to Christ should take on some form of resemblance to Christ's obedience to His Father. His obedience instructs us as to how to obey. And so we note from v. 5 regarding Christ's priesthood *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee*. The One who said this to Him, was, of course, His Father.

Christ did not aim to glorify Himself but He aimed to glorify His Father. *Father, glorify thy name* we find Him praying in Jn. 12:28. And in His high priestly prayer in Jn. 17:4 He confesses the aim of His earthly ministry and the success with which He met that aim. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* And earlier in John's gospel we read His testimony: Jn. 8:29 *And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

It becomes clear then, doesn't it, that Christ did not aim to glorify Himself – He aimed instead to glorify His Father. And if we would aim to follow Him in the obedience of faith then we must make it our aim to glorify God in all that we do and in all that we refrain from doing. The first question in our shorter catechism sets this forth as our chief aim for it asks in question one: What is the chief end of man? And the answer is: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Ever since the fall of man it has been man's chief end to glorify himself. He has adopted the proud notion that everything should be about him and that everything should be catered to him as if to suggest that he is the center of the universe. One of the first marks of salvation is a breaking out of this sinful mode.

It takes the grace of God and the power of the gospel to break out of such a sinful mode and to heed the exhortation of Paul in Phil. 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* Such a practice goes completely against the grain of sinful pride. I dare say that our culture could be described as the whole-hearted pursuit of vain glory and of engaging in all manner of strife in the pursuit of vain glory and the esteeming of self better than others.

I can remember from my days in the printing industry that I found it necessary to print out in large letters and mount on the wall of my cubicle the verse from Col. 3:23,24 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

I needed the constant reminder that I was not there to promote myself and try to get ahead. However ahead I got I simply took it as it came knowing that I had a higher aim. And I was not there simply to add to the riches of the owner of the company. I was there to endeavor to bring glory to my Savior. My work ethic was governed by the desire of leading others to think well of Him.

What a blessing to be delivered from self. What liberty a Christian finds in devoting himself whole heartedly to his Lord and leaving everything in Christ's hands. We certainly come more to resemble Christ by adopting such a lifestyle for as v. 5 tells us *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest.*

Now we could say much more on the subject of glorifying not ourselves but glorifying God instead. If you have Thomas Watson's Body of Divinity then you've probably seen the 17 ways he lists in which we may glorify God. Let me give you a sampling of some of those ways. He notes:

1. It is glorifying God when we aim purely at his glory. It is one thing to advance God's glory, another thing to aim at it. God must be the ultimate end of all actions. Thus Christ said in Jn. 8:50 *I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him that sent me.*
2. We glorify God by an ingenuous confession of sin. The thief on the cross had dishonored God in his life, but at his death he brought glory to God by confession of sin.
3. We glorify God by believing. Rom. 4:20 *Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*
4. We glorify God by fruitfulness. Jn. 15:8 *Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.*
5. We glorify God, by being contented in that state in which Providence has placed us. We give God the glory of his wisdom, when we rest satisfied with what he carves out to us.
6. We glorify God by standing up for his truths. Much of God's glory lies in his truth. God has intrusted us with his truth, as a master intrusts his servant with his purse to keep.
7. We glorify God by praising him. Psalm 50:23 *Whoso offerth praise glorifieth me.*

These are a few of the ways in which we glorify God. It would make for a good exercise to add to the list and then keep track of how you strive for each of these things. In all these things we imitate our Savior and we're instructed by His example to seek not our own glory but the glory of our Savior and Redeemer. So obedience begets obedience by instructing us to aim for God's glory.

Would you consider next that obedience begets obedience:

II. By Reminding Us of What We've Gained

Our text makes it very plain what Christ gained for us by His obedience. Look again at the words of Heb 5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*

He became the author, not so much in the sense that He designed salvation – that is generally attributed to God the Father. But He became the author in the sense that He accomplished salvation and He is the head of His people, the church. It's a title, therefore of rank and we recognize Christ to be the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18).

This should be the most compelling factor when it comes to your obedience to Christ. You have gained salvation through Him. His obedience unto death has rescued you from everlasting death. His righteousness has supplied what you have lacked in order to qualify you for heaven. His being made a curse has delivered you from being cursed of God. His bearing of God's wrath has saved you from that wrath.

When you think, therefore, on what you were and indeed what you are apart from Christ and when you think of where you were headed which was the broad road leading to destruction – do you not find yourself compelled to confess – *I owe Christ everything – all that I am and all that I have I owe to Him.* And do you not find this compulsion to be the

compulsion of love? I suppose another way to state our theme this morning would not be merely that obedience begets obedience but that love begets love. His love for us should compel us to love Him in return. And how is our love to Him to be manifested? He has said it Himself – *if ye love me then keep my commandments*.

Notice if you will how salvation is described in our text. It's referred to as eternal salvation. Here is a gift from God, then, that never perishes. Your standing with God on account of Christ is treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal (Mt. 6:20). Here is something more durable than anything you could gain in this world. Indeed it's more durable than the entire world.

I love the way it's described by David in 2Sam. 23:5 where we read *he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire*. Your salvation was planned in eternity past when God the Father entered into a covenant with His Son. And your salvation was ordered in all things – not one detail was missing. The day of your conversion was as much a decreed day as the conversion of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. And God's watch care over you made certain that you were preserved for that day. There was no way you would miss that day.

And because the covenant of redemption is ordered in all things David could go on to say that it was sure. It became a sure thing. Christ would die for you and the Spirit of Christ would regenerate you and awaken in your heart a desire for Christ so that you too could say like David – *this is all my salvation and all my desire*.

Earlier in our studies we saw another designation for salvation. Back in 2:3 we read of *so great salvation*. And that's a description for salvation that we'll spend eternity exploring. It is certainly great in the planning of it, and great in the execution of it, and great in the application of it to your soul. It is great in the price that was paid for it and it's great in the durability of it.

Perhaps the greatest aspect to this so great salvation is the person of Christ Himself. We gain not only heaven and not only everlasting life – we gain not only the blessing of sins forgiven and the blessing of God's favor but the blessing of Christ Himself. *The LORD is my light and my salvation* the Psalmist exclaims in Ps. 27:1.

And as this salvation sets us up on high then we find ourselves compelled to run after Christ. I love the way this expressed by the Psalmist in Ps 18:29 *For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall*. Isn't that a vivid description of the strength and energy that salvation unleashes in our hearts? Our obedience, then, is not something that is forced it becomes something that we desire.

We love the Lord our God and His Son Jesus Christ. We bless the Holy Spirit for revealing Christ to our hearts so our greatest desire becomes obedience – our new found spiritual vitality becomes devoted to obedience. And the more of Christ we learn then the stronger this spiritual vitality becomes. This is why Paul could write that Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. You could scarcely conceive of a

Christian who has any knowledge of the love of Christ and the grace of God who has little or no desire to obey Christ. Such a thing would amount to a blatant denial of the power of the gospel. And so I wonder today – can you say in your own experience that obedience begets obedience? Can you say as the hymn writer does – *That man of Calvary has won my heart from me, and died to set me free, blessed man of Calvary?*

If the reminder of what you've gained stirs your heart to strong desires for obedience then that's evidence of grace in your life – that's evidence that salvation has been wrought. And so we've seen that obedience begets obedience by instructing us to aim for God's glory – and obedience begets obedience by reminding us of what we've gained. It remains for us to consider that obedience begets obedience:

III. By Compelling Us to Follow Christ's Example

I know I've touched upon one aspect of Christ's example already under the first heading on aiming for the glory of God and not seeking our own self promotion. But would you notice from our text what it says about the way in which Christ learned obedience. Look again at Heb 5:8 *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*

This is where obedience poses a challenge to us. It was posing a challenge to the Hebrews to whom this epistle is addressed. They were suffering. They were being persecuted and following Christ had become hard. Oh it's one thing to bask in the love of Christ when the sun is shining and we're sailing through life under clear skies and a gentle breeze. Obedience isn't so challenging then.

But it's quite another thing to follow in the obedience of faith when the storms have gathered and unleashed their fury upon us and life becomes hard. Not even one with as high a spiritual ranking as Job could keep from complaining when his trial became severe and his trial was prolonged.

Elihu, the young man who speaks near the end of the book of Job hits the nail on the head when he says of Job that he had chosen sin over affliction (Job 36:21). He reached the point where he justified himself rather than God. It's especially in such times of trial that we do well to recall Christ's example and the fact that He rendered His obedience through suffering.

When the world despised Him, He continued to obey. When the world scoffed and mocked and insulted Him, He continued to obey. Even while He hung suspended between heaven and earth from Calvary's cross He continued to render perfect obedience to His Father. And so Paul writes of Him to the Philippians that He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8).

I'm afraid that too often we fall short of such an example. And especially in a world such as ours where life for the most part is pretty soft do we find it challenging to render obedience when we meet up with circumstances that are not so much challenging or oppressive but they make rendering obedience just a little inconvenient.

Later in this epistle the Apostle will issue an exhortation that is perhaps more applicable to our day than it was to the days of those Hebrew Christians. In 12:3,4 he writes: *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

Let us strive, then, with the example of Christ's obedience ever before us. And let us strive with the same aim in view. V. 9 tells us that *being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation*. Perfection is our standard and though it seem beyond us we should not settle or be contented with anything less.

How could we settle for anything less when we serve a perfect Savior and we've been blessed with a perfect standing before God because we've been purchased with perfect blood? We're exhorted to this standard by Christ Himself in Mt 5:48 where He says to us: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And the motivation to strive for this perfection is provided for us earlier in Mt. 5 where Christ declares His purpose for coming into the world – *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets*, He says in Mt. 5:17 *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*. And the fact that He succeeded in fulfilling the law and the prophets is our salvation.

So His example compels us to press on even when life presents His challenges. His example compels to aim high in our strivings. And His example should compel to condescend to keep low. Recall what I said earlier in my introduction with regard to v. 8 – *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.*

He condescended to place Himself under the law of His Father. It's our part according to Paul in Ro 12:16 to: *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. And to Be not wise in your own conceits.*

This is how obedience begets obedience then – it's Christ's obedience that accomplishes our salvation and so compels us to obey Him. Let His aim become your aim – as He aimed for the glory of His Father. Let the reminder of what you've gained become the driving force behind your striving. You've gained eternal salvation through Him. And let His success in rendering obedience through suffering compel you to continue to strive even when the challenges of life seem insurmountable.

And as you reflect on who He is and what He's done for you, may you find within your soul a motivational force that that will drive you on in the power of His love. This is how obedience begets obedience.