

We come this week to what I'm assuming is the final sermon in our short series entitled—Parental Instruction (or The instruction of children, by parents, in religious and spiritual truth)—thus far I've suggested parents must teach their children about God, His law, His gospel, conversion, and this morning—parents must teach their children about obedience...

Now—before I come to my topic—I need to make one brief clarification—and that is—I'm here speaking about a specific kind of obedience called—Christian or evangelical obedience—this is the kind of obedience that is pleasing to God—not pleasing in the sense that we are accepted because of it (only the obedience of Christ pleases God in this sense), but pleases God in the sense that a Father takes delight in His beloved and obedient children...

This is the ultimate goal of Parental Instruction—not merely that our children become Christians—but that they become holy and obedient Christians—think again of the order of these sermons—we must teach our children about God, His law, His gospel, conversion, and Christian obedience...

- I. Five Descriptions of Christian obedience
- II. Three Closing Exhortations of the Whole

- I. Five Descriptions of Christian obedience

- A. It presupposes a right relationship

1. By this I mean—before anyone can render Christian obedience—he or she must first become a true Christian...
2. No person can rightly obey God—can rightly obey the law—until they are first in a right relationship with God...
3. Perhaps I can put this another way—no work is ever considered a "good work" by God unless we are in Christ...
4. Now—this does not deny that unsaved people in some sense do "good things" but these are not good in the true sense...
5. Rom.3:10—"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God...there is none who does good, no, not one..."
6. But—this is very different with regards to the regenerate—for their works are now acceptable to God for Christ's sake...
7. That is—He not only receives their persons because of Christ, but He also receives their works as also pleasing...
8. Now—as I've said above—this doesn't mean that they please God so as to earn or merit acceptance with Him...
9. But—because of Christ, God has accepted us, and He now rejoices in us, as His needy yet beloved children...
10. William Ames—"Our good works while we live here are imperfect and impure in themselves. They are not acceptable to God, except in Christ..."
11. 1Pet.2:4-5—"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (Rom.7:4; Heb.9:13-14)..."
12. These verses describe Christians as the New Covenant temple and priesthood—who offer up spiritual sacrifices...
13. [1] WHAT is accepted—"to offer up spiritual sacrifices accepted to God"—by "sacrifices" is meant all that we give God...
14. I think obviously, in the first place, it includes our religious acts of worship—such as PRAYER and PRAISE...

15. But—I suggest that it also includes the service that we render to God, as New Covenant priests, in all that we do...
16. Rom.12:1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service..."
17. [2] WHY it's accepted—"through Jesus Christ"—that is—all that we do is acceptable to God because of Christ...
18. Now—let me put this as simply as I can—through Christ—we have been accepted into the very house of God...
19. We are now His children—and because we are His children—the Father accepts us and He accepts our obedience...
20. Let me put it like this—in Christ we are not only forgiven (legally justified), but we are accepted (adopted)...
21. And when God accepts or adopts us into His family—He now accepts our sincere works as pleasing to Him...
22. For example—last week was my birthday—and several of you children made me cards or drew me pictures...
23. There was one that only had scribbles on it, and the name Neil at the bottom—it was a masterful work of art...
24. Now—Neil isn't my son, but because I love him, I accept what he offers me in sincerity, as something that pleases me...
25. So too—when God accepts us in Christ, when He adopts us into His family, He also accepts our sincere obedience...
26. The other day—as I was thinking of this point—this little phrase came to mind that's been a blessing to me...
27. God accepts us in Christ—God (the Father, Son, and Spirit), accepts (loves) us (sinners), in Christ (for His sake)...
28. Thus—before I leave this first point—I want to suggest two important lessons or applications that come from it...
29. [a] Our obedience has nothing to do with our acceptance with God—there is a sense in which God sees no sin in us...
30. Our Christian children must understand—that in one sense nothing can change our relationship with our Father...
31. This is similar to their relationship with us—nothing they ever do—will ever make us love them less than we do...
32. They will never become less our children, and we will never, regardless what they do, be any less their parents...
33. Now—here's the reason—because God accepts us in Christ—Christ's perfect obedience is ours BY FAITH...
34. Thus—let me ask you—does Christ's perfect obedience ever become less perfect, does it ever lose its merit...
35. No—because Christ's perfect obedience has been imputed to our account, judged as perfect as Christ Himself...
36. Eph.5:1-2—"Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma..."
37. [b] Our obedience has everything to do with our enjoyment of that acceptance—our sin hinders our sense of acceptance...
38. This brings me to an important distinction—while God does not see our sin in one sense, He sees it in another sense...
39. Thus—sin, really hinders the intimacy that exists between us and God—it disrupts the enjoyment of our acceptance...
40. Jn.14:21—"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him..."

41. Jn.15:9-10—"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love..."
42. Now—whatever these verses mean, they certainly suggest, a very close relationship between obedience and intimacy...
43. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love"—that is—in the sensible awareness of that love...
44. Conversely, disobedience will disrupt that intimacy, and drive a wedge between the awareness of Christ's love...

B. It conforms to a right standard

1. By this I mean—true and Christian obedience conforms to the righteous standard and requirement of the law...
2. Regardless of what we do, and why we do it—if it contradicts the holy standard of the law it's not a good work...
3. Now—let me clarify—for children still under the authority of their parents—to disobey parents is to disobey God...
4. Eph.6:1-2—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise..."
5. The Heidelberg Catechism—"Q.91. What are good works? Only those which are done out of true faith, in accordance with the Law of God, and for his glory, and not those based on our own opinion or on the traditions of men..."
6. Gal.6:1-2—"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ..."
7. The relationship between v2 and v1 is debated—some have suggested there isn't really any connection at all...
8. If there is—I suggest it's something like this—in v1 we have an example of what "bearing a burden" looks like...
9. V2—"Bear one another's burdens"—that is—"treat others as you would be treated"—"love others as yourself..."
10. Thus—to "bear one another's burdens" is one vital expression of Christian love—which fulfills the law of Christ...
11. What is meant by "the law of Christ"—well, it's the Ten Commandments in the hands of Christ, or to those in Christ...
12. 1Pet.2:24-25—"who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed (Rom.6:18; 8:1-4)..."
13. [a] We've died to sins—that is—we have died to sin as a master and way of life—we no longer live for sins...
14. What is sin, but the transgression of the moral law of God—it's acting, thinking, and speaking against the law...
15. [b] We live for righteousness—that is—we now live for right living—as defined by the righteous law of God...
16. This means—we think, act, and speak in agreement to the holy and just law of God as found in the Ten Commandments...
17. [1] Christian obedience obeys the law universally, Ps.119:4-6—"You have commanded *us* To keep Your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments..."
18. [2] Christian obedience obeys the law heartily, Ps.119:34—"give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart" v69—"the proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep your precepts with my whole heart..."
19. Thomas Boston—"Hypocritical obedience may please men, but not God, the searcher of hearts...that sacrifice that lacks the heart, will never be accepted on God's altar..."

20. [3] Christian obedience obeys the law speedily, Ps.119:59-60—"I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments..."

C. It proceeds from right motives

1. That is—Christian obedience doesn't comply with a right standard—it complies with that standard for the right reasons...
2. Now—though Scripture provides many motives for us to obey God—I want to suggest two of the most important...
3. [1] Gratitude—that is—in view of all that God has done for us in Christ—we should obey His righteous law...
4. [2] Love—by this I mean—we should obey God's law—not only because of what He's done, but because of who He is...
5. This is no doubt, the greatest motive for Christians to obey God's commands—because we love His lovely person...
6. Thus—these two—gratitude and love—form a powerful incentive or motive for Christians to obey their Father...
7. Ex.20:1-2—"And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me (Lev.11:45; Jn.14:15)..."
8. These words are given to the newly redeemed nation of Israel—and I want to suggest two things from them...
9. [a] We should obey because of who God is—"And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the LORD your God..."
10. Oh my dear Christian children—why should you obey God's law, but because it's the law of your heavenly Father...
11. [b] We should obey because of what God has done—"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage..."
12. Now—we must remember that, as a nation, Israel's redemption, shadowed the redemption of God's people from sin...
13. Why should Christians obey God—but because He has redeemed us from our native bondage to sin and Satan...
14. Rom.12:1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service..."

D. It's performed by a right principle

1. By this I mean—for any work to be done rightly—it must be done by faith—without faith it's impossible to please God...
2. Now—most of us are familiar with James 2:20—"Faith without works is dead"—but—works without faith is also dead...
3. Thus—twice within the book of Hebrews we read about "dead works"—or works done by dead sinners (Heb.6:1; 9:14)...
4. Simply put—every work done without faith in Christ, is a dead work—"for without faith it's impossible to please God..."
5. Rom.3:31—"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law (by faith)..."
6. Now—by "faith" according to the context of this letter, is meant the gospel, which is appropriated by faith...
7. Thus—the question is really—Does the gospel render the law no longer necessary—does it make the law useless...
8. The answer is a resounding NO—God forbid—"On the contrary, we establish the law"—we fulfill it by faith...

9. For our limited purposes, perhaps I can word it like this—The gospel puts the law in its right and proper place—we obey the law by faith in the gospel...
10. Thus—at this point I want to say two brief things about faith as it relates to a distinctly Christian obedience...
11. [1] It's in Christ—that is—faith works because it connects to Christ, who is the source of all grace and strength...
12. Jn.15:5—"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing..."
13. In other words—true Christian obedience isn't proud and self-sufficient—it's humble and dependant on God...
14. [2] It's from the Spirit—that is to say—the faith that works, is worked within us through the work of the Spirit...
15. It is for this reason—Christians are describes as those who "walk BY the Spirit" or are "lead BY the Spirit"...
16. Rom.8:4—"He condemned sin the flesh (God dealt with sin in the body of Christ), that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (by us) who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit..."

E. It's done for right ends or purposes

1. Here—I want to begin by making a distinction between secondary and primary ends or reasons for obedience...
2. That is—by secondary purposes I refer to those that have to do with ourselves and others, and by primary I mean the glory of God...
3. Heidelberg Catechism (Q.86)—"Since we are redeemed from our sin and its wretched consequences by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why must we do good works? Because just as Christ has redeemed us with his blood he also renews us through his Holy Spirit according to his own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for his goodness and that he may be glorified through us; and further, so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ..."
4. [1] A good conscience—that is—it's not wrong to obey God with a desire to maintain a good conscience before Him...
5. Disobedience brings with a bad or troubled conscience—but Christian obedience provides a good conscience...
6. Eph.6:1-3—"Children, obey your parents in the lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you..."
7. Acts 24:14-16—"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust. 16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men..."
8. [2] The good of others—that is—we obey God and love our neighbor, because it brings them temporal and eternal good...
9. Remember, the essence of the law—love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves...
10. [3] The glory of God—this is the primary goal, to which all secondary goals point—that God would be glorified...
11. Thus—technically speaking, these are all ONE goal—keeping a good conscience and helping others glory God...
12. For example—children, because you love your parents you want their best—you want to bring them great joy...
13. Prov.15:20—"A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother (thinks little of her)..."

14. Thus—it is wrong for children to obey their parents out of love to them, and a desire to bring them joy—NO...
15. No—of course it's not wrong, it's in fact, every way right—but this isn't the ultimate or final goal of obedience...
16. Children—while it's good that you obey your parents because you love them, you must ultimately obey because you love God...
17. Matt.6:1-4—"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly..."
18. Eph.6:5-8—"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free..."

II. Three Closing Exhortations of the Whole

A. Imitate the Father's work

1. Here—I want to suggest three exhortations—to help parents more diligently instruct their children in religious things...
2. I trust it goes without saying that God the Father is the perfect parent—who perfectly instructs His children...
3. But—here I simply want to remind of two things about this instruction—[1] it is patient, and [2] it is persistent...

B. Pray for the Spirit's work

1. We must remember—unless the Spirit of God bless our instruction—our children will never be benefit from it...
2. Some of you will remember the illustration I used several weeks ago—that our children are similar to lanterns...
3. Thus—we must fill them full of oil (knowledge), and pray that God would ignite within them a flame of faith in Christ...

C. Trust in the Son's work

1. By this I mean—we must trust in Christ's perfect parenting in our stead and place—this is the basis of our acceptance...
2. The Scriptures, on occasion, refer to Christ as a Father, who graciously and patiently parented His beloved disciples...
3. Isa.9:6—"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace..."