

BIBLE STUDIES ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6 vs 9 to 13

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Part 7.

THE PRINCIPLE OF OBEDIENCE

In continuing our study of 'The Lord's Prayer' it is essential that we consider the importance of obedience, because to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven requires 'Obedience'. Obedience to hear God's Word and act accordingly. The word obedience is, of course, connected to the word 'Obey' which in O.T. times meant 'To hear'.

To begin with let us turn our attention to Genesis chapters 1 & 2, and see how the principle of obedience was established, and how Adam and Eve broke it. God had created a wonderful world in which these two were placed, and they had the advantage of living in a world without sin, weeds, sweat, violence, murder, corruption and pollution.

God only forbid one thing: they were not to take of the fruit of a tree called, 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil'. Here was where the principle of obedience was established on the earth. Adam and Eve were told that on the day they ate of this tree they would die. What died was their moral perfection - they became morally imperfect, and also what died was their moral purity - they became morally impure.

It was God's will that they both remained totally innocent. When God established the principle of obedience for them, they had no knowledge of what disobedience was, or even the outcome of what disobeying God was like. They were created with innocence as part of their nature. In their state of innocence they had no conscious knowledge of what good and evil were. They were only conscious of good and at this point sin was not in their nature.

Up to the time they went against God's Word, they were doing God's will on earth as it was done in heaven. The moment Adam and Eve took the fruit out of the frame God had place it in, it became necessary for God to put into operation His predestined will to bring the earth back to the place where His will would again be done on earth as in heaven.

It was God who established the principle of obedience. It was Satan who established the attitude of disobedience.

Gen 2 v 17 is the verse where the Lord establishes the principle of obedience. It says: "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die".

Following this, and the creation of Eve for Adam, things begin to go wrong. You will notice from the next verses of scripture that the serpent bypasses Adam, who was created first, (and was the one who God established the principle of obedience with in the first place), and goes to Eve, who had been told of the regulation by Adam.

Gen 3 vs 1 to 13 says Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,

3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked;

so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

What is noticeable here is that the serpent does not give recognition to the order God had set in creation. The serpent goes to Eve, who was the second created being, and speaks to her. The legislation regarding the restriction placed upon eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was established with Adam. In going to Eve the serpent is deliberately showing contempt for the principle established by God. The moment both Adam and Eve

partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a spirit of disobedience was introduced into their nature.

“Thy will be done on earth as in heaven” necessitates obedience.

It will be beneficial at this point if we consider some of the characters in scripture and see how the principle of obedience affected them, and then also notice how the spirit and attitude of disobedience affected others. Without going into detail we already know the effect and result of disobedience on Adam and Eve, so I won't refer to them any further.

I would like us to look at Abraham because it tells us that he believed God and that as a result it was credited to him for righteousness.

Romans 4 v 3 says: “What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’.”

James 2 v 23 says: “And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s friend’.”

In Genesis 12 we have the story recorded of the occasion when the Lord spoke to Abraham. Let's read what it says:

Gen 12 v 1 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

2 I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated

and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

6 Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

It was as a result of his obedience that Abraham received from God approval on the way he lived. The story of Abraham shows us that there are three things inseparably linked together in relation to His will on earth. (a) Believing. (b) Obedience. (c) Righteousness.

Abraham believed, however he not only believed he obeyed. It was the result of his obedience to what he was instructed to do that resulted in the blessing he received. The blessing was righteousness.

To pray 'Thy will be done' is all about obedience. The will of God can only be done if we are prepared to abandon what we want to do and surrender and accept what His will is, the story of Abraham proves this.

Paul in his letter to the Romans states clearly the effects of disobedience and obedience on man. Listen to what he says in Rom.5 v 19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous". Obedience is the key to doing His will on earth. We are wrong therefore to pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven' unless we are prepared to put into practice the principle of obedience.

To show the disadvantages of not obeying let us now turn our attention to King Saul, reading:

1 Samuel 15 vs 17 to 23: Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

19 Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted

to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

The end result of Saul not being obedient was that he lost his position as King over the Nation of Israel. Saul was not the only one who lost out because of disobedience.

In the Book of Jonah we read of the problems he encountered as a result of his disobedience. In chapter 1 he is called by the Lord to go on a mission to Nineveh to speak to them about the wickedness of their city, but Jonah rather than obeying the Lord chooses to do opposite to what the Lord had assigned. As a consequence he finds himself in an awful mess. Deviating from what God's will is always results in people finding themselves in a mess. Jonah was a prophet of the Lord but chose to disobey the voice of the Spirit as he was directed. When you read through the Book of Jonah you will notice how many other people were affected as a result of Jonah not carrying out God's will and his disobedience. It is so important to take the words 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven' seriously, and to accept the outcome whatever it is because obedience can only result in blessing and never in anything else. The great and marvellous fact related in this story is that God came to Jonah a second time. Jonah 3 v 1 says: "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time". This time he obeyed.

It is better to do the will of God in the first instance although, it is a true fact that when someone acknowledges their mistake in failing to do the will of God, he never writes them off but gives a further opportunity for His will to be fulfilled.

Abraham, Saul and Jonah have been referred to, though only briefly, however it has to be stated that the reference to them makes it clear that there is more to gain from doing God's will, than trying to avoid it.

The greatest example of a person doing God's will on earth, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 40 v 8, which is prophetic of Christ says: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart". And John 8 v 39 says: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him". Let us consider here what obedience meant by observing scripture in connection to Him.

1. HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS HE SUFFERED

Heb 5 v 8 & 9: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him".

These verses are conveying to us that the Lord Jesus understood what obedience was by the things he felt. The phrase 'learned obedience by the things which He suffered' does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient. Rather, that He learned obedience through his experience as a Man. His humanity was in this sense 'completed', which is the meaning of the Greek word, translated 'perfected' in this context.

2. HE WAS OBEDIENT TO DEATH

Phil 2 v 8 says: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". The Lord Jesus submitted himself to the death of the cross, He laid down His own life, and no one took it from Him. In all aspects of His life He was obedient and it cannot be said that He did anything opposite to the will of His Father. Where He went, what He said and did was all in accordance with the Fathers will.

Finally let us look at how obedience is related to us.

(a) OBEDIENCE IS AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR SONSHIP

John 1 v 12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name".

(b) OBEDIENCE IS AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR DISCIPLESHIP

John 13 v 34: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another".

(c) OBEDIENCE IS AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT OF STEWARDSHIP

Malachi 3 vs 8 to 10: "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How do we rob you?" In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it"

It is the will of God that we conform and comply with all the statements in scripture that require a commitment. To petition, 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven' calls for a response from each one, only then can the words of the hymn be sung with sincerity.

"Sweet will of God still fold me closer, till I am wholly lost in Thee".