

The School of Obedience

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8. OBEDIENCE TO THE LAST COMMAND

'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.' -Matthew 28:19.

'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' -Mark 16:15.

'As Thou hast send Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world' -John 17:18; 20:21.

Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth.' -Acts 1:8.

All these words breathe nothing less than the spirit of world conquest. *'All nations,' 'all the world,' 'every creature,' 'the uttermost part of the earth,'* - each expression indicates that the heart of CHRIST was set on claiming His rightful dominion over the world He had redeemed and won for Himself.

He counts on His disciples to undertake and carry out the work. As He stands at the foot of the throne, ready to ascend and reign, He tells them, *'All power (authority) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,'* and points them at once to *'all the world,'* to *'the uttermost part of the earth,'* as the object of His and their desire and efforts.

As the King on the throne, He Himself will be their helper: *'I am with you always.'* They are to be the advance guard of His conquering hosts even to the end of the world. He Himself will carry on the war. He seeks to inspire them with His own assurance of victory, with His own purpose to make this the only thing to be thought of as worth living or dying for - the winning back of the world to its GOD.

CHRIST does not teach or argue, ask or plead: He simply commands. He has trained His disciples to obedience. He has attached them to Himself in a love that can obey. He has already breathed His own resurrection Spirit into them. He can count upon them. He dare say to them: *'Go ye into all the world.'*

Formerly, during His life on earth, they had more than once expressed their doubt about the possibility of fulfilling His commands. But here, as quietly and simply as He speaks these divine words, they accept them. And no sooner has He ascended than they go to the appointed place, to wait for the equipment of a heavenly power from their Lord in Heaven, for the heavenly work of

making all the nations His disciples.

They accepted the command and passed it on to those who through them believed on His name. And within a generation, simple men, whose names we do not even know, had preached the gospel in Antioch and Rome and the regions beyond. The command was passed on, and taken up into the heart and life, as meant for all ages, as

MEANT FOR EVERY DISCIPLE

The command is for us, too, for each one of us. There is in the New Testament Church no privileged clan to which alone belongs the honor, nor any servile clan on which alone rests the duty, of carrying the gospel to every creature.

The life CHRIST imparts is His own life, the spirit He breathes is His very own Spirit, the one disposition He works is His own self-sacrificing love. It lies in the very nature of His salvation that every member of His body, in full and healthy access with Him feels himself urged to impart what he has received.

The command is no arbitrary law from without. It is simply the revelation, for our intelligent and voluntary consent, of the wonderful truth that we are His body, that we now occupy His place on earth, and that His will and love now carry out through us the work He began, and that now in His stead we live to seek the Father's glory, in

WINNING A LOST WORLD BACK TO HIM

How terribly the Church has failed in obeying the command! How many Christians there are who never knew that there is such a command! How many who hear of it, but do not in earnest set themselves to obey it! And how many who seek to obey it in such way and measure as seems to them fitting and convenient.

We have been studying what obedience is. We have professed to give ourselves up to a whole-hearted obedience. Surely we are prepared gladly to listen to anything that can help us to understand and carry out this our Lord's last and great command: the gospel to every creature.

Let me give you what I have to say under the three simple headings: Accept His command. Place yourself entirely at His disposal. Begin at once to live for His kingdom.

I. ACCEPT HIS COMMAND

There are various things that weaken the force of this command. There is the impression that a command given to all and general in its nature is not as binding as one that is entirely personal and specific; that if others do not their part, our share of the blame is comparatively small; that where the difficulties are very great, obedience cannot be an absolute demand; that if we are willing to do our best, this is all that can be asked of us.

Brethren! this is not obedience.

This is not the spirit in which the first disciples accepted it. This is not the spirit in which we wish to live with our beloved Lord. We want to say, each one of us - If there be no one else, I, by His grace, will give myself and my life to live for His kingdom. Let me for a moment separate myself from all others, and think of my personal relation to JESUS.

I am a member of CHRIST's body.

He expects every member to be at His disposal, to be animated by His Spirit, to live for what He is and does. It is so with my body. I carry every healthy member with me day by day, in the assurance that I can count upon it to do its part. Our Lord has taken me so truly up into His body that He can ask and expect nothing else from me. And I have so truly yielded myself to Him that there can be no idea of my wanting anything but just to know and do His will.

Or let me take the illustration of *'the Vine and the branches.'* The branch has just as much only one object for its being as the vine-bearing fruit. If I really am a branch, I am just as much as He was in the world - only and wholly to bring forth fruit, to live and labor for the salvation of men.

Take still another illustration. CHRIST has bought me with His blood. No slave conquered by force or purchased by money was ever so entirely the property of his master, as my soul, redeemed and won by CHRIST's blood, given up and bound to Him by love, is His property, for Him alone to do with it what He pleases. He claims by divine right, working through the HOLY SPIRIT in an infinite power, and I have given a full assent, that I live wholly for His kingdom and service. This is my joy and my glory.

There was a time when it was different. There are two ways in which a man can bestow his money or service on another. In olden time there was once a slave, who by his trade earned much money. All the money came to the master. The master was kind and treated the slave well. At length the slave, from earnings his master had allowed him, was able to purchase his liberty. In course of time the master became impoverished, and had to come to his former slave for help. He was not only able, but most willing to give it, and gave liberally, in gratitude for former kindness.

You see at once the difference between the bringing of his money and service when he was a slave, and his gifts when he was free. In the former case he gave all, because it and he belonged to the master. In the latter he only gave what he chose.

In which way ought we to give to CHRIST JESUS? I fear many, many give as if they were free to give what they chose, what they think they can afford. The believer to whom the right which the purchase price of the blood has acquired, has been revealed by the HOLY SPIRIT, delights to know that he is the bond slave of redeeming love, and to lay everything he has at his Master's feet, because he belongs to Him.

Have you ever wondered that the disciples accepted the great command so easily and so heartily? They came fresh from Calvary, where they had seen the blood. They had met the risen One, and He had breathed His Spirit into them.

During the forty days, *'through the Holy Ghost [He] had given commandments unto [them].'* JESUS was to them Saviour, Master, Friend, and Lord. His Word was with divine power; they

could not but obey. Oh, let us bow at His feet, and yield to the HOLY SPIRIT to reveal and assert His mighty claim, and let us unhesitatingly and with the whole heart accept the command as our one life-purpose: the gospel to every creature.

II. PLACE YOURSELF AT HIS DISPOSAL

The last great command has been so prominently urged in connection with Foreign Missions that many are inclined exclusively to confine it to them. This is a great mistake. Our Lord's words, *'Teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,'* tell us what our aim is to be - nothing less than to make every man a true disciple, living in holy obedience to all CHRIST's will.

What a work there is to be done in our Christian churches and our so-called Christian communities ere it can be said that the command has been carried out! And what a need that the whole Church, with every believer in it, realize that to do this work is the sole object of its existence! The gospel brought fully, perseveringly, savingly to every creature: this is the mission, this ought to be the passion, of every redeemed soul. For this alone is the Spirit and likeness and life of CHRIST formed in you.

If there is one thing that the Church needs to preach, in the power of the HOLY GHOST, it is the absolute and immediate duty of every child of GOD, not only to take some part in this work, as he may think fit or possible, but to give himself to CHRIST the Master, to be guided and used as He would have.

And therefore I say to every reader who has taken the vow of full obedience - and dare we count ourselves true Christians if we have not done so? - place yourself at once and wholly at CHRIST's disposal. As binding, as is the first great command on all GOD's people, **'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,'** is this the last great command too - **'The gospel to every creature.'** Ere you know what your work may be, ere you feel any special desire or call or fitness for any work, - if you are willing to accept the command, place yourself at His disposal.

It is His as Master to train and fit and guide and use you. Fear not; come at once and forever out of the selfish religion which puts your own will and comfort first, and gives CHRIST what you see fit. Let the Master know that He can have you wholly. Enroll yourself at once with Him as

A VOLUNTEER FOR HIS SERVICE

GOD has in these few past years filled our hearts with joy and thanksgiving at what He has done through the Student Volunteer Movement. The blessing it is bringing the Christian Church is as great as that coming to the heathen world.

I sometimes feel as if there were only one thing still needed to perfect its work. Is there not a need of an enrollment of Volunteers for Home Service, helping its members to feel that as intense and undivided as is the consecration to which the Volunteer for foreign work is stirred and helped is the devotion CHRIST asks of every one, whom He has bought with His blood, for His service in saving the world? What blessings have not these simple words, 'It is my purpose, if GOD permit, to become a foreign missionary,' brought into thousands of lives!

It helped them into the surrender of obedience to the great command, and became an era in their history. What blessings might not come to many who can never go abroad, or who think so, because they have not asked their Master's will, if they could take the simple resolve By the grace of GOD I devote my life wholly to the service of CHRIST's kingdom!

The external forsaking of home and going abroad is often a great help to the foreign volunteer, through the struggle it costs him, and the breaking away from all that could hinder him. The home volunteer may have to abide in his calling, and not have the need of such an external separation-he needs all the more the help which a pledge, given in secret, or in union with others, can bring. The blessed Spirit can make it a crisis and a consecration that leads to a life utterly devoted to GOD.

Students in the school of obedience study the last and great commandment well. Accept it with your whole heart. Place yourselves entirely at His disposal.

III. AND BEGIN AT ONCE TO ACT ON YOUR OBEDIENCE

In whatever circumstances you are, it is your privilege to have within reach souls that can be won for GOD. All around you there are numberless forms of Christian activity which invite your help and offer you theirs. Look upon yourself as redeemed by CHRIST for His service, as blessed with His Spirit to give you the very dispositions that were in Himself, and take up, humbly but boldly, your life calling, to take part in the great work of winning back the world to GOD.

Whether you are led of GOD to join some of the many agencies already at work, or to walk in a more solitary path, remember not to regard the work as that of your church, or society, or as your own but as the Lord's. Cherish carefully the consciousness of doing it unto the Lord, of being a servant who is under orders, and simply carrying them out; your work will then not, as so often, come between you and the fellowship with CHRIST, but link you inseparably to Him, His strength, and His approval.

It is so easy to get so engrossed in the human interest there is in our work, that its spiritual character, the supernatural power needed for it, the direct working of GOD in us and through us, all that can fill us with true heavenly joy and hope is lost out of sight. Keep your eye on your Master, on your King, on His throne.

Ere He gave the command, and pointed His servants to the great field of the world. He first drew their eyes to Himself on the throne: *'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.'* It is the vision, the faith, of CHRIST on the throne that reminds of the need, that assures us of the sufficiency of His divine power. Obey, not a command, but the living Almighty Lord of Glory; faith in Him will give you heavenly strength.

These words preceded the command, and then there followed, **'Lo, I am with you alway.'** It is not only CHRIST on the throne-glorious vision! - that we need, but CHRIST with us here below, in His abiding presence, Himself working for us and through us. CHRIST's power in Heaven, CHRIST's presence on earth - between these two pillar promises lies the gate through which the

Church enters to the conquest of the world.

Let each of us follow our Leader, receive from Himself our orders as to our share in the work, and never falter in the vow of obedience that has given itself to live wholly for His will and His work alone.

Such a beginning will be a training time, preparing us fully to know and follow His leading. If His call for the millions of dying heathen come to us, we shall be ready to go. If His providence does not permit our going, our devotion at home will be as complete and intense as if we had gone.

Whether it be at home or abroad, if only the ranks of the obedient, the servants of obedience, the obedient unto earth, are filled up, CHRIST shall have His heart's desire, and His glorious thought - the gospel to every creature - find its accomplishment!

Blessed Son of GOD! Here I am. By Thy grace, I give my life to the carrying out of Thy last great command. Let my heart be as Thy heart. Let my weakness be as Thy strength. In Thy name I take the vow of entire and everlasting obedience. Amen.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
