

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

77. ON CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE

Obedience to the divine command is essential to the character of a child of God. "A son honors his father. If, then, I be a father, where is my honor, says the Lord of hosts?" "If you love me, keep my commandments." "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me." How far removed from the truth as it is in Jesus, are those who consider it legal to enforce obedience to the moral law! The life of Christ was an undeviating display of perfect holiness, and sinless obedience to the will of his Father. From the manger to the cross, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. The obedience of Christ was without reserve; "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me." "My food and drink is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." "Oh my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, may your will be done." Oh, that we may have grace to drink deeply into the spirit of our divine Emanuel, and under every suffering dispensation to say, "The will of the Lord be done."

What blessedness is treasured up in this single petition; "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If we could live under the daily influence of believing prayer, we would indeed be happy. Our wills being molded into the will of God, we would acquiesce in all the divine dispensations. With Eli, we would say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good to him." With Aaron, we would hold our peace. With Job, under the deprivation of earthly comforts, we would exclaim, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." With David, our language would be; "I was dumb, I opened not my month; because you did it." With Habakkuk, we would sing, "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains." Thus, with holy Paul, we would learn, in whatever state we are in, therewith to be content. Oh how happy we would be, if we never felt in our hearts one desire or affection contrary to the will of our heavenly Father! It is the lack of perfect conformity to the commands of God, which occasions so much darkness and distress, so much sin and suffering in the world. The more we resemble Jesus, in his life and spirit; the more we are made willing to do and to suffer the holy will of God; the more of joy and peace will dwell in our souls. If the will of God were done on earth as it is in heaven, what showers of blessings would descend upon it! Then would be realized the glowing descriptions of the latter-day glory, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

As pilgrims, journeying through a darksome wilderness, our heavenly Father has provided for us a lamp, to lighten our path, and to cheer us on our way. David prized this blessing; "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Oh how greatly should we value it, now that it contains the full revelation of the will of God to man! Let us daily study and pray over the book of God; then the word of Christ will dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and make us fit, through the Spirit, for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Are any asking, what does the Lord require of us? Hear, and your souls shall live.

1. "God commands all men everywhere to repent." Acts xvii, 30. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ." I John iii 23. Have we done the will of God, by turning away from all our iniquities and receiving Christ as our only Savior? Repentance and faith are the gifts of grace; "Jesus is exalted to be a prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." "He is the author and finisher of our faith." Under the conviction of our own helplessness, and his fullness of power and love, have we prayed to him for strength to repent and believe with the heart unto righteousness? What evidence do we possess of having obtained help from the Lord? Is our stubborn will subdued? Are our earthly desires mortified? Have we renounced our own righteousness, and thrown ourselves upon Christ for every blessing, as the fruit of his perfect atonement, and obedience to the law for man? Are we willing to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all?

2. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." John xv, 12. Sweet and delightful precept!—To a renewed mind, the commandments of Jesus are not grievous; his service is perfect freedom; his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Holiness would be our happiness, were it not for that carnal mind which is enmity against God. Love reigns, wherever Christ dwells. God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. Oh what a happy world would this be, if love governed every heart, and directed every action. Are our hearts alive to the welfare of our fellow-creatures? Passing over the boundaries of kindred, sect, and nation, can we feel a Christian affection for all, of every climate and of every color, who bear the Savior's image, who are the objects of his love, and the subjects of his kingdom? Does our charity manifest its indwelling by acts of kindness, liberality, and sympathy; by spiritual communion, and intercessory prayer? Is the love of Christ to us the pattern of our love to others? Lord, shed abroad your love in our hearts, that we may prove our discipleship by dwelling in the element of holy love.

3. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." Difficult and self-denying duty! Oh how counter does this precept run to the stream of natural corruption! And yet, divine grace can enable us to practice this command of love also. It is true, we cannot, nor are we required to love our enemies, if they be enemies for the Gospel's sake, as we would love our dear Christian friends; yet, we must feel towards them a love of compassion for their souls; we must pray for their conversion; and requite them good for evil. We must resemble him who makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

4. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. iv, 3. The great design of Christ's coming into the world, was to save sinners; to save them from their sins; from this present evil world; and from the wrath to come. Having made atonement for us by his death upon the cross, and ascended up, far above all principality and power, he now sheds forth the Holy Spirit, to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He has promised, and encouraged us to pray for the Spirit of truth, the Comforter. Are we daily seeking after this blessing by fervent, believing prayer? What evidence have we that our prayer has been answered? Have our minds been guided into all truth? Are we led by the Spirit out of ourselves to the cross of Christ? Do we walk in the Spirit, under the daily power of his sanctifying grace? Do we seek the extermination of every bosom-sin, and labor to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts?

5. "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thess. v, 18. Gracious command! Truly God wills the happiness of his people, when he wills that they shall have a thankful heart. Who is so happy as the rejoicing believer, saved through the blood of Jesus? How varied soever be his crosses and trials, he can bless God for them all, because on each he can read, in legible characters, "whom the Lord loves, he chastens." As the affliction abounds, the consolation does also abound; for when all around him is storm and tempest, he can sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Thus he rejoices in the Lord always, and in everything gives thanks.

Have we thus done the will of God, endeavoring, through the Spirit, to maintain a praising frame? Filled with gratitude for the blessing of redemption, do we delight in speaking good of his name, and telling of his salvation from day to day? Oh what happiness we lose, by not cultivating a thankful spirit! Were we deeply sensible of our deserts, as sinners, we would be overwhelmed at the sight of our mercies, so freely and abundantly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ. May the Lord make us duly thankful; then, we shall devote all our powers to his service and glory, who has redeemed us at so rich a price.

"Come, Oh Spirit of holiness, come into our hearts, and make your abode within us. Come, precious pledge of all spiritual and eternal blessings, and be within us, as the witness of our adoption into the family of God; the seal of our salvation. Make us willing to welcome your approach, and to receive you with joy and gladness. Mold our souls into the image of Jesus; conform our wills to the will of God. Fill us with the light of truth, and the fire of love. Oh give us a foretaste of celestial happiness, by the inward manifestations of your favor. Teach us to know ourselves. Guide us into the way of peace. Preserve us from the wiles of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, the corruption of the flesh, the allurements of the world. Arm us for the spiritual combat. Strengthen us by your power, and make us more than conquerors through him who has loved us, and given himself for us. Sustain us, as we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and bring us, with songs of triumph, into the heavenly Zion. To free, sovereign, boundless love, be all the praise."

Gracious is our heavenly king,
 Let us each his praises sing,
 Ever loving, ever kind,
 Seek—[^]for all who seek shall find.
 Let us seek Him in his Son,
 Who by grace our hearts has won;
 Seek him, through the Spirit's power,
 Wait the soft refreshing shower.
 Lord, to us yourself impart,
 Cheer and bless each longing heart;
 Keep us all from evil free,
 Make us live for heaven and thee.
 May we all your love possess,
 Traveling through this wilderness,
 Until we reach your dwelling place,
 And behold you face to face.