

Families

Unleashing

Enthusiastic

Love



AUGUST

FUEL MONTHLY LESSON



OBEDIENCE CREATES
OPPORTUNITY

Accountable for Obedience

Month of August

Hebrews 5:7-9

Who [Christ], in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

God's goal for each believer is for the person "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Image can be understood as "characteristics." In other words, God is seeking to develop the character of His Son, Jesus, in each of us. As God does this in our lives, we become better instruments for use in His kingdom work.

One of the characteristics of Jesus is His faithful obedience to do exactly what the Father asks of Him. John's Gospel clearly describes this truth. For example, in John 5:19, we see Jesus explaining His actions: "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner." Further, John recorded Jesus saying this:

"My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him."

—John 7:16-18

In these passages, we see the character of our Lord clearly:

Jesus obeyed the Father in every area of His life.

He did only what the Father told Him to do.

He spoke only when the Father told Him to speak.

He taught only what the Father told Him to teach.

Remember that God desires this same obedience in our lives. God is seeking to develop the character of His Son in us. Such character is developed through our relationship with Him as He works out in our lives His eternal plan of redemption. He calls us into a relationship with Himself so, in that relationship, we can come to know His will and understand His ways and experience His working in us and through us. In that relationship, and only there, does He develop our character.

(1) His Exaltation (5:4-6)

The writer of Hebrews faces this issue squarely. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (5:4). He is coming to grips now with the crux of the matter.

Only members of Aaron's family could be priests; the Lord Jesus was not of that family. He was born into the tribe of Judah. Despite that fact, His exaltation to the priesthood was authoritative,

because the same One who put Aaron in that office has now put Christ there instead. "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee" ([5:5](#)). The office of the high priest in Jesus' day was filled by evil and politically ambitious men. Ananias and Caiaphas, for example, were a scandal and a disgrace. Their chief purpose was to uphold their own vested interests and their power. Aaron was chosen by God to be a priest; Christ was chosen as God to be a priest. Since He is the Son of God, He has every right to fill that office and is called to it by God for that very reason.

The writer now shows his hand and reminds the Jews of something they had long forgotten: that there was a priesthood that far exceeded that of Aaron and that was in existence long centuries before Aaron ever was born, the priesthood of Melchizedek. God chose Melchizedek to be a priest long before He chose Aaron. In fact, the first mention of the priest in the Bible relates to the priesthood of Melchizedek ([Gen. 14:18-21](#)). This sudden mention of Melchizedek throws a shaft of light into the whole argument of the letter. It would become immediately apparent to the intelligent Hebrew where the argument was leading. At this point, however, the writer does little more than inject the name, but he comes back to it later and builds mightily upon it. So then, Christ was exalted to be a priest as Melchizedek was exalted to be a priest. And, had the writer been composing a psalm instead of a treatise, no doubt he would have inserted a *selah* at this point, meaning, "There, what do you think of that?"

(2) His Experience ([5:7-8](#))

Having mentioned Christ's exaltation to the priestly office by God, the writer next touches again upon His experience. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" ([5:7](#)).

He had experienced, as a man, *the sufficiency of God*. Throughout His lifetime Jesus made prayer and supplication the habit of His life. At every major crisis He was found praying.

In Gethsemane, when the Lord Jesus came to grips with death, the ultimate horror that faces mankind, He prayed to be saved from it, not indeed from physical death, but to be saved "out from under" death. His prayer was answered in His resurrection. On the cross, Jesus prayed again, using the first verse of [Psalm 22](#). (Perhaps He quoted the whole psalm. It certainly fit His needs at that time.)

Jesus not only experienced the sufficiency of God but also *the sufferings of men*. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" ([5:8](#)). A closer and more suitable rendering would be: "Son though he was, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." He was not shielded from suffering. Indeed, since He was truly God as well as truly man, no doubt His sufferings were intensified just as are a doctor's sufferings intensified because he knows full well the ravages and the progress of a disease.

A mad dog is said to have terrorized a village. It had already bitten one person, who had died a horrible death. The village blacksmith finally cornered the dog, holding it at bay while everyone else escaped. He was bitten several times before he finally slew the enraged beast. Returning to

his forge, he deliberately chained himself to an iron fixture so that when his own insanity overtook him the other villagers would be safe from his maddened rage. Then he calmly awaited his doom.

The Lord Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered. His sufferings were real and intense and ran the whole length of every human woe. He is qualified by His experience to be a priest.

(3) His Exploits (5:9-10)

He is an excellent choice as a priest because of His exploits, too. Think of His *personal* exploits. He was "made perfect" (5:9), that is, He was exalted to glory. He always was morally perfect, but these perfections shone as never before in the matchless splendor of His life on earth. Now He has received recognition in glory. The black background against which He walked on earth displays the excellencies of His life just as black velvet brings out the beauty of a diamond.

His exploits were not only personal; they were *perpetual*. He has become "the author of eternal salvation" (5:9) to all who obey Him. He is the cause of salvation; He has brought it into being. It will last as long as He does. Note the emphasis upon *eternal* salvation, for it belies the notion that Hebrews teaches a person can lose his salvation. Salvation is eternal.

A person who is "saved" falls into sin soon afterward and, according to some, loses his salvation. Before he can be "saved again," he dies and goes to a lost eternity. What was he saved from? The penalty of sin? No, because he lost his salvation and is now eternally lost. Was he saved from the power of sin? Evidently not, because he sinned to such an extent that he lost his salvation. Was he saved from the presence of sin? No, because he is not in heaven but in hell, lost forever. He wasn't saved from anything, so he wasn't saved at all. The dire warning passages of Hebrews do not teach that a truly saved person can lose his salvation. Salvation, once accepted, is eternal.

The reference in this verse to obedience does not alter this truth. Vine says that the word *hupakouō* means "to listen, and then to obey the word spoken. The primary reference is to the response to the gospel."

Then, too, the exploits of Christ are *positional*. He is "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec [Melchizedek]" (5:10). That one name, Melchizedek, swept away 1,500 years of Jewish ritual and religion. When Rip Van Winkle fell asleep in the American colonies, King George III ran the country; when he awoke, George Washington was in power. He almost lost his head by shouting for the wrong George! There was a new order in the country. The name *Washington* swept away an entire political system. Similarly, the name *Melchizedek* was a revolutionary name. It swept away an entire system of religion and replaced it with something far greater.

At this second mention of the name *Melchizedek*, all within a few sentences, the intelligent Hebrew reader would begin to pace the floor with a thousand tumultuous thoughts racing through his mind. Aaron! Melchizedek! A ritual priest! A royal priest! A priest installed by the law of Moses! A priest installed before Moses was born!

So then, Christ is not only a real priest, He is a rightful priest. He has been chosen as priest. But before the significance of Melchizedek can be developed, the writer has a challenge, a third warning, to insert: "Don't discredit the Son of God!" The warnings are becoming more serious and sobering, for with increased truth comes increased responsibility.

As God's people are obedient to make their lives available to God in the same way His Son was available to Him, God will work through them to accomplish His eternal purposes. The ultimate result of Christ's obedience was that the Father brought eternal salvation to the human race through the Son.

As you consider Jesus's faithful obedience to do all that the Father commanded, prayerfully reflect on your life. Can you say, as Jesus did, "I do nothing of myself, but only what I hear and see My Father doing"?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, show me where You are working in my world. Help me to learn from You and follow Your example of humble obedience, even during difficult times. Amen.