

God (the Son) Learning Obedience

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Date: 20 August 2017

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[0 : 00] 4 at verse 14 and we'll read into part of chapter 5. So that's the letter to the Hebrews and beginning at chapter 4 and verse 14.

Amen. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Because of this, he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins, just as he does for those of the people. No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, You are my son, today I have begotten you.

[1 : 37] As he says also in another place, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

Though he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And we pray again that God will bless to us our reading of his word. We'll sing once more, and before we come back to look at a couple of verses within this passage, we'll sing this time in Psalm 40, Psalm number 40 from the St. Sam's version on page 50.

And the verses we're singing are from page 51, at the beginning of page 51, at verse 5. The wonders you have done, O Lord, how many and how great they are.

Your plans for us are far beyond our power to number or declare. You did not ask that calves or goats be brought as sacrifice for sin, but you have opened up my ears. You did not seek burnt offering.

[3 : 05] Then I declared, Lord, I have come. It's written of me in the scroll. I want to do your will, my God. Your law is in my heart and soul. In the assembly, when it met, you're just as I proclaimed abroad.

I did not seal my lips at all. You know all this about me, Lord. I did not hide within my heart your saving grace and righteousness. In the assembly, I proclaimed your steadfast love and faithfulness.

These verses from 5 to 10 of Psalm number 40. The wonders you have done, O Lord. The wonders you have done, O Lord, how many and how great they are.

Your plans for us are far beyond our path to number or declare.

You did not ask that calves or goats be brought as sacrifice for sin, But you have opened up my ears.

[4 : 48] You did not seek burnt offering. Then I declare, Lord, I have come.

It's written of me in the scroll. I want to do your will.

My God, your law is in my heart and soul.

In the assembly, when it met, your justice I proclaimed abroad.

I did not seal my lips at all. You know all this about me, Lord.

[6 : 06] I did not hide within my heart your saving grace and righteousness.

In the assembly, I proclaimed your steadfast love and faithfulness.

Well, let's turn back this evening for a short time to Hebrews chapter 5. Hebrews chapter 5 and especially verses 8 and 9.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

Especially these verses and these words in these two verses. There are some remarkable statements in Scripture which really hit you and have an impact that we have to protect.

[7 : 25] For example, in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, we find the Apostle Paul giving direction to the elders in Ephesus, knowing that he was not going to see them again.

And he told them to take care, to shepherd, to feed the flock of God over which the Lord had made them overseers or carers.

And he described that as the flock of God which he has purchased with his own blood. And our tendency perhaps would be to, in some way or other, try and just minimize the impact of that description of God purchasing the church with his own blood.

And that we would tend to say, well, yes, but that's the human nature of Christ. It doesn't mean that God has blood or that God as such can suffer.

But, of course, that takes away from the fact. While that is true, from the fact that it is God in the person of the Son of God, that second person of the Trinity, that one God, who is there described as having shed his blood.

[8 : 42] But it is still God. And it is still God that's brought before us in that remarkable verse, that remarkable statement. And we mustn't try and explain that away or diminish its impact because these verses in the Bible that have such an impact and such a force, surprisingly to us, as we often find, they are there so that that force and that impact will indeed have an effect in our minds and in our hearts and in our lives.

God has actually put them like this in the Scriptures so that as we give our minds and our lives to be ruled by Scripture, these verses that God has given us will, in fact, hit us with the intended force that they have.

And it's something like that here in chapter 5 and in verse 8. It's obviously talking here about Jesus, the Son of God, and Jesus, as described in the previous verses, in the days of his flesh, that he offered up prayers and supplication.

That's then moving on to say, though he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And it strikes you there that that's another remarkable statement because son here equals Jesus.

Jesus equals God in the sense in which he is God. He is divine. He's the Son of God. That's the person he is. That's his identity. You cannot just strip away that aspect of it and leave his human nature and say, yes, he learned obedience as if it was just the human nature of Jesus that was learning obedience.

[10 : 20] It was the Son of God that learned obedience through his experiences in his human nature and especially through his sufferings, as we find it described there.

And that is really because the impact of that is really itself surely very obvious to yourself and myself as we read it because it's really saying that God actually learned something.

God. God who knows everything. God who is omniscient. He knows everything before it happens. He knows everything in terms of the past, the present, the future.

He lives. He dwells in eternity. His mind is such that every single thing that has happened and is happening and will happen are already known to him from all eternity.

And you can't just say, yes, but that's God the Father because God the Son shares in the Godhead and he is himself God, fully God. And so when it says here, though he was a son, he learned obedience, you mustn't just say, well, that's a human nature that's learning obedience.

[11 : 32] It's not. It's the Son of God who learned obedience and therefore in that sense, God incarnate in his Son learned obedience through the things which he suffered.

If you cast your mind back to the earlier parts of Hebrews, especially the earlier chapters here, in fact, right from the beginning, you find that verse 1, long ago at many times, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days, last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.

And then it moves on through and you go to verse 5, for to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my Son, today I have begotten you? Verse 6b, let all God's angels worship him.

And then you have verse 8, but of the Son, he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. And that's what's true of chapter 5 and our verse here as well, though he were a son.

It's the same person he's talking about as is described in chapter 1 as one to whom it was said, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. And you mustn't let the likes of Jehovah's Witnesses or other types of thinking in using the Bible take away from the very strong impact of that word, of that verse.

[12 : 56] That is a verse that's talking of the deity of Christ, of the divineness of Christ. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. You can't just extract that out from the previous and following verses.

So here is something in our verse tonight that's remarkable as having an impact in the way that it's put for us. Though he were a son, though he was a son, yet he learned obedience through what he suffered.

And let's give our minds to two things from these two verses tonight. First of all, the obedience of the Son, of the Son of God, of Jesus. And then secondly, the obedience of the saved.

Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal, the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. And you can see how closely, how dovetailed together, are the obedience of the Son and the obedience of the saved.

He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him. The obedience of Jesus and the obedience of his people are so closely tied together in the thought of these two verses.

[14 : 12] And as we take them, let's take them in turn, but let's remember that they're also, as we'll see, very closely tied together. The obedience, first of all then, of the Son, though he was a son.

And indeed, the very fact that is put like that shows you that the writer to the Hebrews himself was dealing with this as something completely remarkable. In other words, he's really saying, though you would not expect this to be the case of him, because he is no less than the Son of God, because he is no less than God in his divine nature and person, you would not expect him, therefore, to have to learn anything.

You would not expect it to be said of him that he learned, that he was in a position of learning. But that's what it says. He learned, and not only did he learn, he learned obedience.

God incarnate. Not just learning, but learning obedience. Because he came into the world to be the servant of the Father.

You know this very well in terms of the teachings of John, especially, but it's there also throughout the New Testament and indeed all the way back to the old and the likes of Isaiah 53. And the servant passages of Isaiah's prophecy fit in with the servant emphasis in the New Testament as well.

[15 : 40] And as you read these, and as you come to the likes of chapter 10, in fact, of Hebrews here, you just flip forward to verses 5 and 7, 5 to 7 of chapter 10.

Consequently, it says at verse 5, when Christ came into the world, he said, sacrifices and offerings you have not desired. And that's the Psalm 40 that we were singing these verses of a few moments ago.

Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired. In other words, the time of the sacrifices, the offerings of the Old Testament, were coming to an end with the coming of the Son of God into the world in our nature, in our human nature.

So he says, sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it was written of me in the scroll of the book. I have come to do your will.

[16 : 41] I have come to be your servant. I have come in accordance with what's written in the book, with the Old Testament scriptures in mind. I have come are the words attributed to Jesus.

And of course, you find it there mentioned as the Son of God. And here you find though he were a son, though he was a son, though this indeed is who he is and this is his status, yet he learned and he learned obedience.

Now when we think of Jesus learning obedience, the Son of God in our nature learning obedience, we mustn't think of it as something like the way that we learn because when we come from childhood through into adulthood it's a process of learning, isn't it?

But as we very often have to say about ourselves, we learn from our mistakes and we try and make sure we don't carry out the same mistakes that we've made as we've learned from them and learned not to do them again.

Of course, that's sadly not always the case but that's a process of learning that we identify with our own process of learning. It's not like that with Jesus. It's not for Jesus, it wasn't for him a process from making mistakes and then just improving on that until finally he was making no mistakes at all.

[18 : 00] He never made mistakes. He did not sin. not even in thought. His motives were always right. He was never disobedient and even as a boy as Luke tells us in his gospel as his mother Mary and Joseph were looking for him on that day they went to the temple and he got lost and was then found disputing with the doctors of the law the experts in the Old Testament and they were annoyed understandably and said did you not know that we were looking for you that we were concerned for you and he said of course in the famous reply did you not know do you not understand that I must be about my father's business that I must be engaged in the work my father gave me and sent me into the world to actually accomplish the work of the servant the work of redemption but then you see as you go on reading that passage you come to a verse that says he went back with them to his home and was subject to them he was subject to them he was a boy subject to the authority of his parents who is that boy it's the one who said

I must be about my father's business but who is he he's the son of God he is God in our nature he is God the son in our nature accomplishing our redemption and to accomplish our redemption his learning obedience he has come to be the servant of God but not in a way that is detached from suffering or from such things as obedience and remarkable though it is though you wouldn't expect it of this person because he is no less than the son of God yet though he was a son he learned obedience he learned as he went on obedience from giving it not just learning about what it might be it's not telling us that Jesus just studied a textbook as to what obedience was and then gained a full comprehension and understanding of what obedience is now what this is saying to us is though he was a son he learned obedience through what he suffered he learned through his experience he learned obedience by being obedient that's how he learned it and that was a process as we'll see that grew as the demands on his ministry grew all through his life so he learned obedience but then you see it says he learned obedience obedience through the things that he suffered we're doing this tonight in anticipation of the commune just like this morning but of course we have to come back many times other than the communion time to realize the impact of such a verse as this he learned obedience and he learned obedience through what he suffered the whole incarnate life of Jesus was a life of suffering a life of trial a life of facing temptation and overcoming temptation a life of various types of suffering but especially a suffering that was to do with his being the bearer of our sins and paying the penalty of our sins a life in fact that reached the apex of his obedience in the death of the cross the dying of Jesus

Jesus giving himself to the death he died on the cross mentioned this morning that he died spiritually before he died physically he died the death that is indeed the wages of sin as God lays on sin the curse that's due to it eternal death the death that is hell Jesus experienced that in his soul when he cried my God my God why have they forsaken me why the separation and that is really his as Hugh Martin that great Scottish theologian put it in his wonderful book on the atonement one of the places that one of the things he says in that book in terms of the obedience of Christ and he's emphasizing that the obedience of Christ was a positive thing something in which he was actively engaged in giving that obedience to the will of the father to the command of the father to lay down his life by the death of the cross

Martin says we speak he says of his doing and his dying but his dying was his greatest doing it was the greatest of his acts of obedience it was the apex of his obedience and indeed you'll find that coming through in some of Paul's writings particularly his letter to the Philippians comes to mind and that great chapter chapter 2 which again begins with the deity of Christ Christ being fully God and humbling himself and being born in the likeness of men and being found he says in human form which really is fully human it doesn't mean he was like a human he was fully human being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross that's how it literally is in the text of the New Testament it is the death of the cross that death that particular death that death of deaths he humbled himself and was obedient even to the inclusion of laying down his life in that death the death of the cross and in all of that

Jesus gave perfect obedience you see you have to take account of not only is he the son of God as you see him there in his obedience and in giving that obedience though he was the son of God it's also an obedience that involves every faculty of his human nature it is the son of God doing this through his human nature but every aspect every faculty of his human nature what do we mean by that well for example the same faculties that you and I have that make us that made him fully human his mind his understanding his will his heart his mind his emotions every single aspect of his human nature is actively engaged in giving obedience and they're always acting perfectly each of them and all of them together unlike you and I though he were a son yet he learned obedience obedience and he learned obedience through the things which he suffered and that actually brings up again the fact that the learning of obedience by the

[25 : 29] Lord while it was through being obedient it was indeed through his sufferings and it's obvious from the gospel records that as he became as he went on with his ministry and as he became nearer to that moment of the cross and of the death of the cross and all that's involved in that so his sufferings intensified now there's a lot of mystery about this and we don't want to speculate on it but when you come to Jesus in Gethsemane which again is not the cross it's not Calvary it's not the very depth of his sufferings nor yet the very apex of his obedience but it is something more than before that adds sorrow to the life of Jesus that adds suffering to the life of Jesus which is why when in that garden of Gethsemane as Luke tells us when he prayed the more earnestly his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground who can understand the depth of that suffering the pain of Jesus when it led literally to drops of blood being exuded from the pores of his skin falling to the ground and he said father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done and then

Matthew records three times that he prayed each time the more earnestly father if this cup pass not from me except I drink it thy will be done and as you follow these prayers in Gethsemane you'll see that the Lord is actually growing in an obedience that is already perfect and yet is added to as his demands as his sufferings intensify now we can put it something like this as as the Lord's sufferings increased if you think of them reaching a certain level the demand on him to be obedient had to keep up with that had to match that level of suffering in other words not to give up as the suffering got worse and that's what you find in Gethsemane the more the suffering is intensifying equally so the obedience is keeping up with that and you'll find it in the differences in the words of the prayers there first of all it's father let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but thine be done and then he says if this cup pass from me except may not pass from me except I drink it thy will be done and then in John's gospel as he's coming out of Gethsemane as Peter challenges those who are trying to apprehend

Jesus and cuts off the ear of one of them Jesus says put your sword away the cup which my father gave me to drink shall I not drink it he was never disobedient but he had grown into an acceptance of this cup this cup of suffering this death as he saw more into it as he saw more of what it involved which itself is a difficult thing for us to really understand so his obedience kept up with the demand and when he came out of Gethsemane there's no father if it be possible it's just this is the cup and I will drink it I know it mustn't pass from me I'm determined to finish it though he was a son yet he learned obedience through the things which he suffered and then it says and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation let me just in a couple of words look at that he became perfect doesn't mean he was imperfect in the sense of having defects being made perfect really simply means he had come now to the completeness of his obedience the completeness of answering the demands of God the completeness of keeping up with the sufferings in other words he became the fully qualified saviour

God in our nature having experienced all that he needed to experience to be our saviour he became complete and in being complete he became the source of eternal salvation he is the source of our salvation he is the fully complete and he is exclusively the source of our salvation there's no multi-faith explanation of that passage possible you can't actually say yes but there are other saviours that have an equal right to be called saviours to be called those that will bring us to God and will bring us into eternity safely there are none it doesn't matter what name they go by he became being perfect he became he became the source of eternal salvation there is no source of salvation out of Christ other than Christ he became the author the source and when it says eternal salvation the emphasis is not so much on how long it lasts though it is eternal in that sense it's everlasting and the emphasis there is much more on the quality of that life rather than its duration in other words it's not just saying to us that eternal life as it is indeed eternal life is something that goes on forever but it's actually more than that it's not how long it goes on for that's important it's how good it is it's how good it is it's the quality of it and what else would you expect but something of the highest good what else would you expect but life that is better than in any way we could devise or even think of because such a thing has procured it for us as the obedience of

Christ or Christ in his obedience so next Lord's day that's what we're remembering we remembered that though he were a son though he was the son of God yet he learned obedience he went through a process of learning and the process of learning involved learning obedience giving obedience and he learned it through the things which he suffered and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him and this is not just tacked on at the end although our time is passing the obedience of the saved is also an important emphasis there who is he the author of salvation to or for and one way of answering that is the way that this verse answers it he is the author he is the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey him not to everyone indiscriminately not to everyone who ever lived not necessarily even to everyone who knows the gospel but rather to those who obey him and that obedience that we are confronted with there is first of all an obedience that's our obligation and also an obedience secondly that's our necessity

[33 : 41] I'm not going to go into any great depth with these I'm not going to expand on them too much but it's important that we just take in the main features of it before we finish it's an obedience first of all it's our obligation we are obliged to be obedient to Jesus in other words he deserves that obedience and to fail to obey the Lord is really acting in my life and in your life as if he didn't deserve our obedience obedience and when you think and when you think of the remarkable statement that that is obedience and that therefore he deserves our obedience to and not only does he call for it and deserve it he really does command it to doesn't he is our Lord and as such he commands our obedience and that applies to the Lord's

Supper as well after all the Lord's Supper was instituted by this Jesus and by a command on his part this do in remembrance of me they're all imperatives they're all commands associated with the elements of the Lord's Supper Jesus took the bread and said take eat this after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the New Testament this do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me there's an imperative a command not only does he deserve our obedience he commands our obedience and some people think you see that that will mean well that means that this Christian religion thing is really something that's forced on you if it's really inclusive of a command by

God or a command by the Savior doesn't that mean that you're really doing that against your will well of course it doesn't because when we come to give our obedience to Jesus we don't do it reluctantly we don't do it reservably we don't do it thinking well I am doing it but it's I'd rather do something else obedience to Jesus is a loving obedience an obedience in which you take delight to obey him though at times it is difficult David Livingston great missionary once put it like this if a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor how can a commission by our heavenly king be considered a sacrifice in other words he's saying if we really think we're giving up so much in coming to obey

Jesus we've missed the point it's not a matter about giving up things in order to give our lives to Jesus to obey Jesus it's not what we give though we're giving obedience our obedience is in terms of what we receive and whatever it is in terms of personal cost as sometimes it is and indeed always to some extent is what we think of in obeying Jesus as he deserves to be obeyed as he commands us to obey him is that really the best thing we could do is to obey him to receive the best that he offers to receive this life this eternal salvation we are not conscripts forced into the following of Christ as our Lord we are volunteers through God's grace coming to make us willing and coming to turn our hearts into hearts that love to obey him so it's our obligation but it's also finally it's also a necessity on our part because without it you see we cannot be saved what he's saying is that he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him in other words to those who don't obey him he is not at least for the moment the source for them personally of eternal salvation and what it's saying to us is that you cannot be saved without obedience to

Christ on your part personally now we're not saved because of our obedience we can't say that once we are obedient to Christ and give our lives to him and seek to obey him in the course of our lives that we're saved because of that that's not what it's saying we're saved because of his obedience but we're not saved without ours we're not saved without our obedience in coming to receive from him what his obedience has bought for us we through obedience have him as the source of eternal salvation looking at it from our side we cannot subtract or extract obedience to Christ from faith in Christ mustn't ever separate these two as if as if they were separable or different things where there is faith in Christ there is obedience to

[39 : 33] Christ where there's obedience to Christ there is faith or trust in Christ and you can really follow that through yourselves in chapter 11 a list of those who lived by faith you can see the element of obedience coming through in that if I mentioned just three verses maybe for you there Hebrews 11 and look at verse 7 where by faith Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark he was obedient to what God told him to do although there was no sign at that moment of any impending catastrophe but he obeyed he did what God commanded him he lovingly complied you have the same later on with chapter in verse 8 in the chapter by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance you find the same about him on in verse 17 by faith

Abraham when he was tested offered up Isaac all of that was to do with the obedience of faith obedience that is such an integral part of the believer's life of the believer's experience and so coming to the Lord's supper you come with that obedience an obedience that is itself the fruit of his obedience the obedience through which you have come to know him as the source of eternal salvation to yourself so how can we sum up both tonight and also our thoughts this morning where we looked at the way in which the side of Jesus was pierced and how that was a testimony to John of the blood of Christ atoning blood and the water that came from his side as a symbol of washing or of cleansing of sin well you can do no better surely than finish with chapter 13 of

Hebrews and verses 12 to 14 where it says there in the precious before that going back to the Old Testament in verse 11 the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp that was the practice in Old Testament times so Jesus also suffered outside the gate that to mean outside the Jerusalem outside the city outside the temple outside all of that he suffered outside that he might sanctify the people through his own blood therefore let us go out to him outside the camp then you can to