



The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

"And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness."

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THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Dr. Daniel Steele in "Heart and Life"

In the epistle to the Romans St. Paul uses the expression, "the obedience of faith," twice in the Greek. It indicates more than justification by faith, the great doctrine which is set forth and defended in that epistle. It shows that true obedience springs from faith in Jesus Christ, and receives all its vitality from that root. There is but one command which the sinner is called upon to perform before evangelical faith. This is repentance. In fact, it is a part of faith, as the introduction is a part of the book. There is a divine philosophy in the order of these two precepts, "Repent" and "believe."

Repentance toward God must precede faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—such repentance as leads the wicked man to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, before he can effectually "turn unto God, who will abundantly pardon." By this assertion we do not deny that the regenerate soul has a clearer view of his sins, and a stronger abhorrence of his depravity, after he is born of the Spirit than before that great and glorious work. Now the important question arises: "How can this proclivity toward sin be eradicated from the regenerate soul, so that it may hereafter gravitate upward, and not downward?" This is the real want of thousands of God-fearing people:

"Grovelers below, yet wanting will to rise;
Tired of the world, unfitted for the skies."

Many have been told that they must wait till death—the greater redeemer than the Son of God, and the mightier sanctifier than the Holy Spirit—has come to their relief. It is true that Jesus does not propose to present us unto Himself faultless in the presence of His glory, freed from infirmities, those scars of sin, till we have crossed the river of death. But Jesus has a balm for the medication and perfect cure of the wounds of sin in this life. Hence St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to cleanse themselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And He prays for the Thessalonians, first, that they may be sanctified "wholly"; and secondly, that their "whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This certainly means sanctification before death, and preservation in a state of holiness in this life.

Many Christians do not attain this state because they fail to discriminate between the expiatory work of Christ, which has as its object the removal of guilt, and the office of the Holy Spirit, which is the renovation of the

soul. Justification by atoning blood is the work of the second person in the Trinity; sanctification is that of the third. Where this distinction is lost, and the unity of God is the only doctrine preached, as in the Mohammedan mosque, the Jewish synagogue, and the Unitarian Church, we look in vain for the spiritual transformation of the worshippers. It would be like looking for fruitful orange groves in Labrador. Justification is promoted in proportion as the guilt of sin and its only remedy, the blood of Christ, are most emphasized; and entire sanctification is in proportion to the faithful portrayal of sin in believers, and its great antidote, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, "purifying their hearts by faith."

Now, the important practical question remains to be answered: "What must a justified soul do to attain this state of holiness, the extinction of inbred sin?" The words, "obedience of faith," contain the answer. What am I to obey? The sum of the law is epitomized by Jesus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Can I do this in my own strength? No; but I can bring my powers and capacities as empty vessels unto the Holy Spirit, and He will fill them by shedding abroad the love of God in my heart. He does this by revealing to me the fact of God's great love to me, which awakens my soul to respond to His great love with all the capacity of my being. This bringing my empty heart to God is the act of consecration in obedience to Christ's summary of man's whole duty. When this is done, and unwavering faith in the divine promise accompanies the act, the soul realizes the cleansing power and the fullness of God. But when the faith is inadequate the cleansing may take place, but not the fullness of love. From this state the believer either very soon falls back into the old mixed life of sin and repentance, or goes forward to the experience of "all the fullness of God."

To abide in this state of perfect victory and full trust we are to walk by the same rule of "the obedience of faith," and mind the same things that we did when we entered this state, by daily maintenance of our consecration, and a renewed grasp of the promises. The power of God must be relied upon as much in our abiding in, as in our entering, this state. We are to be "kept by the power of God through faith." When we shall find a stream steadily flowing without a supplying fountain we may expect to find a soul living in holiness without the enabling efficiency of the Holy Spirit. The figure of a "well of water springing up into

eternal life" is explained subsequently by John as the fullness of the Spirit in the heart.

The intimate connection between obedience and faith is expressed by Christ, when He says: "If any man will do (or wills to do) his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

A beautiful illustration of this occurs in "Cecil's Remains." His little daughter was one day playing with some beads which she seemed to prize very highly. Her father very abruptly commanded her to throw them into the fire. "The tears started in her eyes. She looked very earnestly at me," he says, "as though she ought to have a reason for such a cruel sacrifice. 'Well, my dear, do as you please; but you know I never told you to do anything which I did not think would be good for you.' She looked at me a few moments longer, and then, summoning up all her fortitude, her breast heaving with the effort, she dashed them into the fire. 'Well,' said I, 'let them lie; you shall hear more about them another time; but say no more about them now.' Some days after I bought her a box full of larger beads and toys of the same kind. When I returned home I opened the treasure and set it before her. She burst into tears with joy. 'Those, my child,' said I, 'are yours because you believed me when I told you it would be better for you to throw those two or three paltry beads into the fire. Now, that has brought you this treasure. But now, my dear, remember as long as you live what faith is.'"

Here faith and obedience are beautifully interlaced, like golden and silver threads intertwined, for the adorning of the character.

The fact that genuine faith always includes obedience is a sufficient answer to the skeptic's objection that salvation is made to hinge upon a bare intellectual act, without reference to the character of the agent. It is just the opposite. It is an act of submission to the highest authority in the universe—an act which tends to conserve its moral order, by enthroning the moral law in universal supremacy.

A singular confirmation of the truth of these remarks is found in the Greek Testament, where the Greek word for unbelief is frequently used to signify disobedience and obstinacy. The unbelief for which men are to be everlastingly condemned lies in the rebellious attitude of the will toward Jesus Christ, and not in any supposed innocent intellectual inability to believe the truth of God's Word.

The practical bearing of all this upon those who are seeking to be lifted into the higher regions of Christian experience is that the faith which is the required condition of such a spiritual uplift is possible only to a soul whose

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