

Children's Moment

March 8, 2015

Title: Obeying God

Object: King on Throne

Scripture: *“Jesus having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”* (Hebrews 5:9)

Westminster Shorter Catechism for Children

14 Question – Where do you learn how to love and obey God?

Answer - In the Bible alone.

The Bible teaches, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise)”* God says that if you obey your parents because He has given you to them for them to care for you and raise you to know and love God that He will bless you. God says, if you obey your parents *“THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.”* The Bible says by obeying your parents you will grow up to become men and women who know how to live rightly before other people and God.

Then God says, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* (Ephesians 6:1-4) You see to lead you well your fathers and mothers must learn to obey God first. When we learn to obey God then we can lead others well.

Let me ask you a question. Can Kings do whatever they want because they are king and ruler over many people? Let me tell you a true story. Many years ago when kings had the power to let people live or to put them to death there was a kingdom called Bavaria, which today is part of the country known as Germany. King Henry had grown tired of ruling – he was tired of having to make decisions and having to

take care of the people and having to protect the kingdom. So, he decided to enter a monastery, which is like going to church and never leaving and he wanted to become a monk, which is like being a pastor but without people to care for. A monk spends most of their time studying the Bible and praying. When King Henry arrived at the monastery he went before the Prior, which is the chief monk in charge of the monastery. The Prior's name was Richard.

Prior Richard began to tell King Henry that in the monastery he would have to obey very strict rules and would have to obey everything that Prior Richard told Henry to do. The King said he would obey and do whatever Prior Richard told him because God had given Prior Richard authority to rule the monastery and all the monks there.

Prior Richard told King Henry that obedience is the first thing required to love and serve God. The King promised he would be obedient to everything the Prior demanded and would follow every instruction the Prior gave him. At this point the Prior looked King Henry in the eye and said, "Then go back to your throne and do your duty where God has placed you." The King obeyed Prior Richard's order and the King went back to his castle and sat upon his throne and ruled by obeying what God taught in the Bible. He ruled well because he had learned how to obey. The people followed Henry's rule because he placed their needs second only after obedience to God. So, you see King Henry learned to govern or lead well by learning to obey.

You father and mother are able to teach you because they have learned to obey God. God wants you to learn to lead by learning first to obey your parents. If you obey your parents God promises **"THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU"**. **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

Obedient Love of God

Hasn't this passage in John chapter 14 been the most fascinating set of promises you can imagine? First, Jesus makes it clear that He is the only way people can come back to God and have a relationship with Him in verse 6, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."** The teachings of Christianity found in the Bible are the only eternal truth among the world's many religions. If you believe then you have a responsibility to share Jesus with the lost and you need to know the Holy Spirit will give you the words to touch people's hearts.

Jesus then makes clear that if we know Him and His teachings we know God the Father. **"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."** (John 14:7) Not only do we know God the Father by knowing God the Son, but by knowing Christ we have seen God. The disciples literally saw God by seeing Christ. Even though Jesus no longer walks this earth and is in heaven we see Him both by the power of God the Holy Spirit that indwells our very souls and the spiritual wisdom He gives to understand the Word of God. Following this wonderful promise Jesus says if we are struggling in believing - He has given us miracles and signs and wonders and works to verify that He is God incarnate. **"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves."** (John 14:11) The scriptures are peppered with the works of Christ so that we may believe. As you read the scriptures – do you believe – do you believe in Jesus as the Christ?

Now comes the most amazing promise and it is found in verse 12 **"Truly, truly, I say**

to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” Jesus saw a few hundred people come to believe in Him as the Messiah during His life here on earth. Within 2 months at Pentecost the disciples preached Jesus crucified and risen and over three thousand came to believe as the Holy Spirit empowered both those preaching and those hearing. Today Jesus commands that we are to preach Christ crucified and risen and Jesus promises that the kingdom of Christ will expand as the Holy Spirit works in and through us to reach the souls of those called by God. Are you preaching Christ crucified and risen to anyone who will listen?

Jesus builds upon this promise and adds to it when He tells the disciples and it applies to us that as we obediently carry out the mission He has given us as His ambassadors to this lost world He will give us everything necessary to carry out our mission and everything we ask Him for as we seek His will. “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” Jesus will give us whatever we ask, “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:13-14) Steven was given everything he needed – the courage to die as a strong witness to who Jesus is. Paul was given everything He needed to plant churches and see hundreds come to know Jesus as the Christ. Paul wrote,¹⁰ “As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped ... Paul’s preaching Christ was not stopped by his being²³ beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.” (2 Corinthians 11:10, 23-25) Paul succeeded because his purpose and his goal was the same as Jesus’ will for his life. How about you? Have you earnestly sought the will of Christ for your life? Are you living Jesus’ calling in your

life?

If these wonderful promises are not evident in your life it may very well be because you are not fulfilling God's condition for these promises to be fulfilled in your life. What is this condition? Verse 15 states, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John makes it even clearer when he wrote to the churches in Asia saying, "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." (1 John 3:22-24) Both of these verses from the Gospel of John and his first letter teach the proper relationship between our love of Christ and fulfilling Christ's commandments and we must live both.

Love and Obedience

The first thing Jesus teaches us may seem obvious - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." This truth is important for it deals with a difficult problem that the disciples would soon have to deal with and one that we have to deal with in our time on a daily basis. This problem of the perversion of the Christian faith is not just the obvious; Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons, but from "Antinomianism" (*an-ti-no-mi-an-ism*) with those who call themselves Christian. Can anyone tell me what this long word that is a serious problem with people claiming to be Christian means? *It means a person who holds that under the gospel of dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation.* It tells people that the Laws of God are an enemy of grace. It believes and teaches the God of the Old Testament is stern and unlovable and the New

Testament teaches the only ethical system for living is “love”. So with Antinomianism one does not have to be obedient to the Laws of the Old Testament, thus marriage is a good thing until there is no longer love. When there is no longer love divorce is permissible. Look at the number of pastors who have been divorced. If there is love - adultery and fornication are permitted, parents may be rejected by children – children no longer need to honor them, worldly material goods may become a driving goal in life for they are what bring happiness or love, women are put into leadership in the church this is permitted because they love Jesus and finally, sin is discounted when love is involved. This is a perversion of the teachings of both the Old Testament and the New. I want to be clear that salvation is by grace and not earned by works. Imposing outward rules or laws on people and even if people comply with them does not bring salvation. This is because laws do not change the heart. This is why love, not the law, must lie at the heart of Christian ethics. Now, Antinomianism promotes situational ethics and morality for “our times” taking advantage of grace in isolation without the holistic teachings of Jesus and are abusing what the Bible really teaches. Any love, and people define love in so many ways, any love that is not biblical, any love that does not express itself in living out our lives in conformity with the commands of God the Father and God the Son is NOT the kind of love which Christ teaches in the scriptures. It is a form of self-serving pseudo-love; a false love that damages all involved. These people and some churches will tell you that anything is allowed as long as it is based in love and does not hurt anyone.

As James Montgomery Boice said, “Love may be a valuable guideline, but only if it is love in conformity with the love of God and therefore also in conformity with the commandments he has given.” It is only because of the changed heart within a Christian one is moved to keep the commandments. It is the love of Christ that

drives one to their knees thanking God for His grace and strengthens one to obey. Thomas a Kempis the author of *The Imitation of Christ* written in the early fifteenth century said, “Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace.” Does this help you understand your role, your duty and the purpose of your love of Christ and His commandments as a Christian?

Obedience and Love

We examined what it means by “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” What would it mean if we reversed the order, “If you keep My commandments, you love Me.” I know we are not quite there, but this is exactly what Jesus says in a few verses, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21) How can we know if we obey God’s commandments that Jesus loves us? The answer is found in the nature of mankind. In our natural state we are spiritually dead and because of this we sin freely and are in open rebellion against God. In our fallen state it is not within us to want to obey God. Conversely, when God awakens our souls spiritually and He regenerates our souls we begin to obey Him. As we grow spiritually we desire to become more Christ-like. This is the evidence of God’s divine working within us. This is proof God has regenerated us into a new creation. We have moved from sons of disobedience to children of God.

My dear beloved, take heart and be assured of God’s saving work in your life. I had a hard time thinking God could love me after I got saved – I saw how wretched I was and because I still sinned. I often failed to obey God completely. But, I can look back over the last 30 years and see how God has changed me, how I sin less

and love Him more and have grown to love serving His people. I no longer strove for freedom to do as I willed and I began a life seeking my Master. Take heart for if you detect within yourself a longing to be less like those of the world and you desire to please God and if sin disturbs you and grieves you - rejoice because this is assurance of God working in you and means you are His. Paul wrote to those in Philippi with confidence, *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He (God) who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 1:6) Do you see this process of sanctification in your life? Do you believe this about your life?

Love One Another

There is a third truth we can take away from Jesus saying, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”* This naturally leads us to ask what are Jesus’ commandments? I preached the answer to this question on January 11th of this year. The answer is found in John chapter 13 where Jesus tells us *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:34-35) If you love Jesus you must love other Christians. Do you love others? Before you answer to quickly, how have you reacted to those around you? Do you think the very best of your brothers and sisters until there is a verifiable reason not to? I once heard a pastor say behind every Christian’s face is unknown drama. The pain and drama in our lives are unknown because we fail to love each other and that means to take time to know each other. Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is a practical love and means at least three things.

Christian Love

First, Christian love means **service**. Think of the circumstances when Jesus gave this commandment to **love one another**. I want to spend a few moments on this – please turn to John chapter 13, verse 8 with me. Jesus had just taken most of his clothes off, girded Himself in a towel and washed the disciples feet. I relate to Peter, I would like to know am I the only one here that does? Look in verse 8 Peter says with an attempted absolute, **“Never shall You wash my feet!”** Jesus responds with an a true absolute, **“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”** Then Jesus use this teachable moment saying to all the disciples, skip down to verse 13, **“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”**

(John 13:13-17) Jesus promises blessing if we are obedient in serving others humbly with compassion and love as He modeled. True Christianity is based on love of Christ and then love of others and divests itself of demanding our self-serving desires. Is this how you understand what it means to live a Christ-like life?

Secondly, the practice of Christian love means **sacrifice**. As we saw earlier with Steven and Paul and the rest of the disciples – Jesus did not call them to serve when it was convenient and with no cost. Jesus called the disciples and He calls us to serve at all times – convenient or not and often there is cost – just read about the cost of the disciples and yet they faithfully served. Jesus lowered Himself to wash the disciple’s feet and it was only after He had gone to the cross and fulfilled His mission as the final atonement that the sins of believers were washed away.

He served humbly just as He washed the feet of His disciples. This is the price of Christian service and sacrifice.

Lastly, to practice Christian love means **sharing**. We are to share of ourselves and we are to share the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus. Jesus had risen from the tomb of the dead and returned to commissioned the disciples, just as He has commissioned you and I with a command to **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”** (Mark 16:15) When Jesus gives a command it is not an option. How are you doing with preaching the gospel to the world? How are we doing as a community in fulfilling this command? Beyond preaching to the gospel to the lost Jesus also commanded, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:19-20) In order to make disciples we must teach all that Jesus has commanded us in the Bible. What do you think Jesus’ purpose was in these commands His followers? That we would do greater works than He? Has Jesus commanded you and I to fulfill this? Let me ask, “How can we claim to love Jesus Christ if we are disobedient to these great commandments?”

Conclusion

As we reversed **“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”** earlier we may also reverse the points we just studied; *“If we love others, then we can know that we truly love Jesus and we belong to Him.”* I believe this is a true statement; my question to you is “Do you believe this to be true?” Are you living this? John wrote in his first letter, **“Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”** (1 John 3:13-14) I hope you grasp the seriousness

of this. If I do not love you, all of you – then I have **not passed out of death into life** and remain spiritually dead. I admit this takes effort; at times less and at times more, but that does not matter. Jesus calls us to love each other even when we are unlovable. After all you will need love at some point – is it not a great comfort to know at that time when you need love and probably do not deserve love you will be given love by those here?

So we have come full circle, Jesus said, **“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”** Do we really love Jesus? If you can humbly come before Christ and say, yes, then here is how you are to show it – by loving others and keeping His commandments. There is only one way you will come to love Jesus as God and that is by coming to know Him and believe in Him through the scriptures and in prayer and by letting His Spirit fill you to overflowing. Love incites love. Jesus’ love for you calls forth your love for others. As Jesus tells us of His love for us through the scriptures we can begin to understand that even though we are sinners, nevertheless, Jesus died in our place, the just for the unjust. Read chapter 53 of Isaiah to begin to understand the price of His death and by this price you may know His love. As we understand this we are able to love Him who first loved us. The outward sign of this great love is we obey our Lord, our Savior and our Master and love is found in the obedience of serving. It is my earnest prayer that we all will go from here and strive to love God more deeply and live His commandments and this will be observed in how we sacrificially love each other. If we live Mark 12:30 and 31 all else will fall into place. As the beloved of God saved by Christ - Jesus commands us, saying first, **“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’** The **second commandment is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’** There is no other commandment greater than these.”