

Obedience; the Victorious Life

by Andrew Murray

The victorious life is a life of obedience to God's will, achieved through faith in Christ's power and a new surrender to him.

Scripture: Jeremiah 7:23, John 14:15, Acts 5:32, Romans 5:19, Romans 6:18, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Obedience", "Victorious Christian Living"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes that obedience is essential for living a victorious Christian life, contrasting it with the common misconception that sin is inevitable for believers. He highlights that true obedience, modeled by Christ, is necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit and experiencing God's power in our lives. Murray urges Christians to recognize their need for a deeper surrender to Christ, which enables them to overcome sin and live in accordance with God's will. He reassures that through faith in Christ's power, believers can achieve a life marked by obedience and victory over sin. Ultimately, he calls for a renewed understanding of sin, surrender, and faith to fully embrace the victorious life promised in Christ.

Transcript

In opposition to sin stands obedience. 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous... Ye became the servants of righteousness' (Rom. 5.19; 6.18). In connection with all that has been said about sin, and the new life, and the reception of the Holy Spirit, we must always give to obedience the place assigned to it by God.

It was because Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross, that God so highly exalted him. And Paul, in this connection, exhorts us: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 2.5). We see, above everything else, that the obedience of Christ, which was so pleasing to God, must become really the characteristic of our disposition and of our entire walk. Just as a servant knows that he must first obey his master in all things, so the surrender to an implicit and unquestioning obedience must become the essential characteristic of our lives.

How little this is understood by Christians! How many there are who allow themselves to be misled, and rest satisfied with the thought that sin is a necessity, that one must sin every day! It would be difficult to say how great the harm is which has been done by this mistake. It is one of the chief causes why the sin of disobedience is so little recognised. I have myself heard Christians, speaking about the cause of darkness and weakness, say, half-laughingly: 'Yes, it is just disobedience again.' We try to get rid of a servant as speedily as possible who is habitually disobedient, but it is not regarded as anything

extraordinary that a child of God should be disobedient every day. Disobedience is daily acknowledged, and yet there is no turning away from it.

Have we not here the reason why so much prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit is offered, and yet so few answers come? Do we not see from Acts 5.32 that God has given his Holy Spirit to them that obey him? Every child of God has received the Holy Spirit- If he uses the measure of the Holy Spirit which he has, with the definite purpose of being obedient to the utmost, then God can and will favour him with further manifestations of the Spirit's power. But if he permits disobedience to get the upper hand, day by day, he need not wonder if his prayer for more of the Spirit remains unanswered.

We have already said that we must not forget that the Spirit desires to possess more of us. How can we wholly surrender ourselves to him otherwise than by being obedient? The Scripture says that we must be led by the Spirit, that we must walk by the Spirit. My right relationship to the Holy Spirit is that I allow myself to be guided and ruled by him. Obedience is the great factor in our whole relationship to God. 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God' (Jer. 7.23; 11.4).

Mark how the Lord Jesus, on the last night, when giving his great promise about the Holy Spirit, lays emphasis on this point. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter' (John 14.15, 16). Obedience was essential as a preparation for the reception of the Spirit. And this thought is often repeated by him. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him' (John 14.21). So also in verse 23: 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you' (15.7). 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love' (verse 10). 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you' (verse 14).

Can words more plainly or impressively declare that the whole life, in the new dispensation, following the resurrection of Christ, depends on obedience? That is the Spirit of Christ. He lived to do not his own will, but the will of the Father. And he cannot with his Spirit make an abiding home in the heart of one who does not surrender himself utterly to a life of obedience.

Alas, how few there are who are truly concerned because of this disobedience! How little it is believed that Christ really asks for and expects this from us because he has undertaken to make it possible for us. How much is it manifested in prayer, or walk, or in the depths of the soul-life, that we really endeavour to be well-pleasing to the Lord in all things? We say too little in regard to our disobedience. 'I will be sorry for my sin.'

But is obedience really possible? It is certain for the man who believes that Christ Jesus is his sanctification and relies on him.

Just as it is impossible for a man whose eyes have not yet been opened to see that Christ can at once forgive his sin, so is it also with faith in the assurance that there is in Christ a sure promise of power to accomplish all that God desires from his child. Just as, through faith, we found the fullness of forgiveness; so through a new act of faith, a real deliverance from the dominion of the sin which has so easily beset us is obtained, and the abiding blessing of the continuous experience of the keeping power of Christ becomes ours. This faith obtains a new insight into promises the meaning of which was not previously understood: 'The God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that

which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ' (Heb. 13.20, 21). 'Unto him that is able to keep you from falling ... be glory and majesty' (Jude 24, 25). 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall' (2 Pet. 1. 10). 'To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness' (1 Thess. 3.13). 'But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil' (2 Thess. 3.3).

When the soul understands that the fulfilment of these and other promises is secured for us in Christ, and that, as certainly as the forgiveness of sin is assured to us in him, so also is power against new or fresh attacks of sin assured to us. Then for the first time is the lesson learned aright that faith can confidently rely upon a full Christ and his abiding protection.

This faith sheds a wholly new light on the life of obedience. Christ holds himself responsible to work this out in me every moment if I only trust him for it. Then I begin to understand the important phrase with which Paul begins and closes his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 1.5; 16.26): 'The obedience of faith.' Faith brings me to the Lord Jesus, not only to obtain the forgiveness of sin, but also that I may every moment enjoy the power which will make it possible for me, as a child of God, to abide in him and to be numbered among his obedient children of whom it is written that, as he who has called them is holy, as they also may be holy in all manner of conversation. Everything depends on whether or not I believe on the whole Christ, with the fullness of his grace, that he will, not now and then but every moment, be the strength of my life. Such faith will lead to an obedience which will enable me to 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work... strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power' (Col. 1.10, 11).

The soul which feeds on such promises will experience now, instead of the disobedience of self-effort, what the obedience of faith means. All such promises have their measure, their certainty, and their strength in the living Christ.

The victorious life

In the chapter on 'The More Abundant Life', we viewed the matter chiefly from the side of our Lord Jesus. We saw that there is to be found in him - the crucified, and the risen, and the glorified one who baptises with the Holy Spirit - all that is needful for a life of abundant grace. In speaking of the victorious life, we shall now look at the matter from another standpoint. We want to see how a Christian can live really as a victor. We have already often said that the prayer life is not something which can be improved by itself. It is so intimately bound up with the entire spiritual life that it is only when that whole life (previously marked by lack of prayer) becomes renewed and sanctified that prayer can have its rightful place of power. We must not be satisfied with less than the victorious life to which God calls his children.

You remember how our Lord, in the seven epistles in the Revelation of John, concludes with a promise to those who overcome. Take the trouble of going over that seven-times repeated 'him that overcometh'; and notice what unspeakably glorious promises are there given. And they were given even to churches like Ephesus, that had lost its first love; and Sardis, to whom it was said, 'thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead' (Rev. 3.1); and Laodicea, with her lukewarmness and self-satisfaction - as proof that, if only they would repent, they might win the crown of victory. The call comes to every Christian to strive for the crown. It is impossible to be a healthy Christian, still more impossible to be a preacher in the power of God, if everything is not sacrificed to gain the victory.

The answer to the question, of how we attain to it, is simple. All is in Christ. 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ' (2 Cor. 2.14). 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us' (Rom. 8.37). All depends on our right relationship to Christ, our entire surrender, perfect faith, and unbroken fellowship with him. But you wish to know how to attain to all this. Listen once more to the simple directions as to the way by which the full enjoyment of what is prepared for you in Christ may be yours. These are - a new discovery of sin; a new surrender to Christ; a new faith in the power which will make it possible for you to persevere.

1. A new discovery of sin

In Romans 3, you find described the knowledge of sin which is necessary, in repentance, for forgiveness 'That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God' (verse 19). There you took your stand, you recognised your sin more or less consciously, and confessed it, and you obtained mercy. But if you would lead the victorious life, something more is needful. This comes with the experience that in you, that is, in your flesh, there 'dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. 7.18). You have a delight in the law of God after the inner man, but you see another law in your members bringing you into captivity to the law of sin and compelling you to cry out: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (verse 24). It is not, as it was at conversion, when you thought over your few or many sins. This work goes much deeper. You find that, as a Christian, you have no power to do the good that you wish to do. You must be brought to a new and deeper insight into the sin of your nature and into your utter weakness, even though you are a Christian, to live as you ought. And you will learn to cry out: 'Who shall deliver me; I, wretched man, a prisoner bound under the law of sin?'

The answer to this question is: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 7.25). Then follows the revelation of what there is in Christ. It is not just as given in Romans 3. It is more: I am in Christ Jesus, and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death', (Rom. 8.2) under which I was bound. It is the experience that the law or power of the life of the Spirit in Christ has made me free and now calls on me, in a new sense and by a new surrender, to acknowledge Christ as the bestower of the victory.

2. A new surrender to Christ

You may have used these words 'surrender' and 'consecration' many times, but without rightly understanding what they mean. As you have been brought by the teaching of Romans 7 to a complete sense of the hopelessness of leading a true Christian life, or a true prayer life, by your own efforts, so you feel that the Lord Jesus must take you up, by his own power, in an entirely new way; and must take possession of you, by his Spirit, in an entirely new measure. This alone can preserve you from constantly sinning afresh. This only can make you really victorious. This leads you to look away from yourself, really to get free from yourself, and to expect everything from the Lord Jesus.

If we begin to understand this, we are prepared to admit that in our nature there is nothing good, that it is under a curse, and is nailed with Christ to his cross. We come to see what Paul means when he says that we are dead to sin by the death of Christ. Thus do we obtain a share of the glorious resurrection life there is in him. By such an insight we are encouraged to believe that Christ, through his life in us, through his continual indwelling, can keep us. Just as, at our conversion, we had no rest till we knew he had received us so now we feel the need of coming to him, to receive from him the assurance that he has really undertaken to keep us by the power of his resurrection life. And we feel then that there must be an act as

definite as his reception of us at conversion, by which he gives us the assurance of victory. And although it appears to us to be too great and too much, yet the man who casts himself, without plea, into the arms of Christ will experience that he does indeed receive us into such a fellowship as will make us, from the beginning onwards, 'more than conquerors'.

3. A new faith in the power which will make it possible for you to persevere in your surrender

You have heard of Keswick, and the truth for which it stands. It is that Christ is prepared to take upon himself the care and preservation of our lives every day, and all the day long, if we trust him to do it. In the testimony given by many, this thought is emphasised. They have told us that they felt themselves called to a new surrender, to an entire consecration of life to Christ, reaching to the smallest things, but they were hindered by the fear of failure. The thirst after holiness, after an unbroken fellowship with Jesus, after a life of persevering childlike obedience, drew them one way. But the question arose: 'Shall I continue faithful?' And to this question there came no answer, till they believed that the surrender must be made, not in their own strength, but in a power which was bestowed by a glorified Lord. He would not only keep them for the future, but he must first make possible for them the surrender of faith which expects that future grace. It was in the power of Christ himself that they were able to present themselves to him.

O Christian, only believe that there is a victorious life! Christ, the victor, is your Lord, who will undertake for you in everything and will enable you to do all that the Father expects from you. Be of good courage. Will you not trust him to do this great work for you who has given his life for you and has forgiven your sins? Only dare, in his power, to surrender yourself to the life of those who are kept from sin by the power of God. Along with the deepest conviction that there is no good in you, confess that you see in the Lord Jesus all the goodness of which you have need, for the life of a child of God; and begin literally to live 'by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2.20).

Let me, for your encouragement, give the testimony of Bishop Monte, a man of deep humility and tender piety. When he first heard of Keswick he was afraid of 'perfectionism' and would have nothing to do with it. Unexpectedly, during a vacation in Scotland, he came in contact with some friends at a small convention. There he heard an address by which he was convinced how entirely the teaching was according to Scripture. There was no word about sinlessness in the flesh or in man. It was a setting forth of how Jesus can keep from sin a man with a sinful nature. The light shone into his heart. He who had always been counted a tender Christian came into touch now with a new experience of what Christ is willing to do for one who gives himself entirely to him Listen to what he says on the text: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me' (Phil. 4.13). I dare to say that it is possible for those who really are willing to reckon on the power of the Lord, for keeping and victory, to lead a life in which his promises are taken as they stand, and are found to be true. It is possible to cast all our care on him daily, and to enjoy deep peace in doing it. It is possible to have the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts purified in the deepest meaning of the word, through faith. It is possible to see the will of God in everything, and to receive it, not with sighing, but with singing. It is possible, in the inner life of desire and feeling, to lay aside all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil-speaking, every day and every hour. It is possible, by taking complete refuge in divine power, to become strong through and through; and where previously our greatest weakness lay, to find that the things which formerly upset all our resolves to be patient, or pure, or humble, furnish today an opportunity -through him who loved us, and works in us an agreement with his will, and a blessed sense of his presence and his power to make sin powerless. These things are divine possibilities, and because they are his work, the true experience of them will always cause us to bow lower at his feet and to learn to thirst and long for more. We cannot possibly be satisfied with anything less than - each day,

each hour, each moment, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit - to walk with God.'

Thank God, a life of victory is sure for those who have a knowledge of their inward ruin and are hopeless in themselves, but who, in 'the confidence of despair', have looked to Jesus, and, in faith in his power to make the act of surrender possible for them, they have done it, in his might, and now rely on him alone every day and every hour.

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