

He Obeyed

by F.B. Meyer

Abraham's obedience is a model for believers, demonstrating the importance of trusting and following God's will, and the power of faith to overcome obstacles.

Scripture: Genesis 12:5, Acts 7:4, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Faith", "Obedience"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the profound significance of Abraham's obedience to God's call, illustrating how it led to blessings and opportunities that shaped his life. He reflects on the dangers of partial obedience and the importance of fully committing to God's will, warning against the distractions that can hinder our spiritual journey. Meyer encourages listeners to recognize past delays in obedience and to act promptly, assuring them that it is never too late to return to God's path. He highlights that true faith enables complete obedience, as seen in Abraham's journey to Canaan, and urges believers to trust in God's promises despite uncertainties. Ultimately, Meyer calls for unwavering commitment to God's commands, reminding us that obedience is essential for fulfilling our divine purpose.

Transcript

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed." -- Hebrews 11:8.

Ah, how much there is in those two words! Blessedness in heart, and home, and life; fulfilled promises; mighty opportunities of good -- lie along the narrow, thorn-set path of obedience to the word and will of God. If Abraham had permanently refused obedience to the voice that summoned him to sally forth on his long and lonely pilgrimage, he would have sunk back into the obscurity of an unknown grave in the land of Ur, like many an Eastern sheikh before and since. So does the phosphorescent wave flash for a moment in the wake of the vessel ploughing her way by night through the southern seas; and then it is lost to sight for ever. But, thank God, Abraham obeyed, and in that act laid the foundation-stone of the noble structure of his life.

It may be that some will read these words whose lives have been a disappointment, and a sad surprise; like some young fruit tree, laden in spring with blossom, but which, in the golden autumn stands barren and alone amid the abundant fruitage of the orchard. You have not done what you expected to do. You have not fulfilled the prognostications of your friends. You have failed to realize the early promise of your life. And may not the reason lie in this, that away back in your life, there rang out a command which

summoned you to an act of self-sacrifice from which you shrank? And THAT has been your one fatal mistake. The worm at the root of the gourd. The little rot within the timber. The false step, which deflected the life-course from the King's highway into a blind alley.

Would it not be well to ascertain if this be not so, and to hasten back to fulfil even now the long-delayed obedience, supposing it to be possible? Oh, do not think that it is now too late to repair the error of the past; or that the Almighty God will now refuse, on account of your delay, that to which He once summoned you in the young, glad years, which have taken their flight for ever. "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in goodness and truth." Do not use your long delay as an argument for longer delay, but as a reason for immediate action. "Why tarriest thou?"

Abraham, as the story shows, at first met the call of God with a mingled and partial obedience; and then for long years neglected it entirely. But the door stood still open for him to enter, and that gracious Hand still beckoned him; until he struck his tents, and started to cross the mighty desert with all that owned his sway. It was a partial failure, which is pregnant with invaluable lessons for ourselves.

(1) AT FIRST, THEN, ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE WAS ONLY PARTIAL. --HE TOOK TERAH WITH HIM; indeed, it is said that "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, and Sarai his daughter-in-law; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees" (Genesis 11:31). How Terah was induced to leave the land of his choice, and the graves of his dead, where his son Haran slept, we cannot tell. Was Abraham his favorite son, from whom he could not part? Was he dissatisfied with his camping grounds? Or, had he been brought to desire an opportunity of renouncing his idols, and beginning a better life amid healthier surroundings? We do not know. This, at least, is clear, that he was not whole-hearted; nor were his motives unmixed; and his presence in the march had the disastrous effect of slackening Abraham's pace, and of interposing a parenthesis of years in an obedience which, at first, promised so well. Days which break in sunlight are not always bright throughout; mists, born of earth, ascend and veil the sky: but eventually the sun breaks out again, and, for the remaining hours of daylight, shines in a sky unflecked with cloud. It was so with Abraham.

The clan marched leisurely along the valley of the Euphrates, finding abundance of pasture in its broad alluvial plains, until at last Haran was reached; the point from which caravans for Canaan leave the Euphrates to strike off across the desert. There they halted, and there they stayed till Terah died. Was it that the old man was too weary for further journeyings? Did he like Haran too well to leave it? Did heart and flesh fail, as he looked out on that far expanse of level sand, behind which the sun set in lurid glory every night? In any case, he would go no farther on the pilgrimage, and probably for as many as fifteen years, Abraham's obedience was stayed; and for that period there were no further commands, no additional promises, no hallowed communings between God and His child.

It becomes us to be very careful as to whom we take with us in our pilgrimage. We may make a fair start from our Ur; but if we take Terah with us, we shall not go far. Take care, young pilgrim to eternity, to whom you mate yourself in the marriage-bond. Beware, man of business, lest you find your Terah in the man with whom you are entering into partnership. Let us all beware of that fatal spirit of compromise, which tempts us to tarry where beloved ones bid us to stay. "Do not go to extremes," they cry; "we are willing to accompany you on your pilgrimage, if you will only go as far as Haran! Why think of going farther on a fool's errand -- and whither you do not know?" Ah! this is hard to bear, harder far than outward opposition. Weakness and infirmity appeal to our feelings against our better judgment. The plains of Capua do for warriors what the arms of Rome failed to accomplish. And, tempted by the bewitching allurements, which

hold out to us their syren attractions, we imitate the sailors of Ulysses, and vow we will go no farther in quest of our distant goal.

"When his father was dead, He removed him into this land" (Acts 7:4). Death had to interpose, to set him free from the deadly incubus which held him fast. Terah must die ere Abraham will resume the forsaken path. Here we may get a solution for mysteries in God's dealings with us, which have long puzzled us; and understand why our hopes have withered, our schemes have miscarried, our income has dwindled, our children have turned against us. All these things were hindering our true development; and, out of mercy to our best interests, God has been compelled to take the knife in hand, and set us at liberty. He loves us so much that He dares to bear the pain of inflicting pain. And thus Death opens the door to Life, and through the grave we pass into the glad world of Hope and Promise which lies upon its farther side.

"Glory to God, 'to God,' he saith. Knowledge by suffering entereth, And life is perfected through death."

(2) ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE WAS RENDERED POSSIBLE BY HIS FAITH.

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him. And he took Sarai his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth" (Genesis 12:5). No easy matter that! It was bitter to leave the kinsfolk that had gathered around him; for Nahor seems to have followed his old father and brother up the valley to their new settlement at Haran, and we find his family living there afterwards. [Compare Genesis 11:29; 22:20-30; 24:10; 27:43.] There was no overcrowding in those ample pastures. And to crown the whole, the pilgrim actually did not know his destination, as he proposed to turn his back on the Euphrates, and his face towards the great desert. Do you not suppose that Nahor would make this the one subject of his attack?

"What do you want more, by brother, which you cannot have here?"

"I want nothing but to do the will of God, wherever it may lead me."

"Look at the dangers: you cannot cross the desert, or go into a new country without arousing the jealousy of some, and the cupidity of others. You would be no match for a troop of robbers, or an army of freebooters."

"But He who bids me go must take all the responsibility of that upon Himself. He will care for us."

"Tell me, only, whither you are going, and where you propose to settle."

"That is a question I cannot answer; for, indeed, you know as much about it as I do myself. But I am sure that if I take one day's march at a time, that will be made clear -- and the next -- and the next -- until at last I am able to settle in the country which God has selected for me somewhere."

This surely was the spirit of many a conversation that must have taken place on the eve of that memorable departure. And the equivalents to our words, "Enthusiast," "Fanatic," "Fool." would be freely passed from mouth to mouth. But Abraham would quietly answer: "God has spoken; God has promised; God will do better for me than ever He has said." At night, as he walked to and fro beneath the stars, he may have sometimes been inclined to give up in despair; but then that sure promise came back again on his memory, and he braced himself to obey. "BY FAITH Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, OBEYED" (Hebrews 11:8). Whither he went, he knew not; it was enough for him to know that he went with God. He leant not so much upon the promise as upon

the Promiser: he looked not on the difficulties of his lot --but on the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; who had deigned to appoint his course, and would certainly vindicate Himself.

And so the caravan started forth. The camels, heavily laden, attended by their drivers. The vast flocks mingling their bleatings with their drovers' cries. The demonstrative sorrow of Eastern women mingling with the grave farewells of the men. The forebodings in many hearts of imminent danger and prospective disaster. Sarah may even have been broken down with bitter regrets. But Abraham faltered not. He staggered not through unbelief. He "knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day." "He was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform."

Moreover, the sacred writer tells us that already some glimpses of the "city which hath foundations," and of the "better country, the heavenly," had loomed upon his vision; and that fair vision had loosened his hold upon much which otherwise would have fascinated and fastened him.

Ah, glorious faith! this is thy work, these are thy possibilities! -- contentment to sail with sealed orders, because of unwavering confidence in the love and wisdom of the Lord High Admiral: willingness to arise up, leave all, and follow Christ, because of the glad assurance that earth's best cannot bear comparison with heaven's least.

(3) ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE WAS FINALLY VERY COMPLETE.

"They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, AND INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN THEY CAME" (Genesis 12:5). For many days after leaving Haran, the eye would sweep a vast monotonous waste, broken by the scantiest vegetation; the camels treading the soft sand beneath their spreading, spongy feet; and the flecks finding but scanty nutriment on the coarse, sparse grass.

At one point only would the travellers arrest their course. In the oasis, where Damascus stands today, it stood then, furnishing a welcome resting-place to weary travellers over the waste. A village near Damascus is still called by the patriarch's name. And Josephus tells us that in his time a suburb of Damascus was called "the habitation of Abraham". And there is surely a trace of his slight sojourn there in the name of his favorite and most trusted servant, Eliezer of Damascus, of whom we shall read anon.

But Abraham would not stay here. The luxuriance and beauty of the place were very attractive; but he could not feel that it was God's choice for him. And, therefore, ere long he was again on the southern track, to reach Canaan as soon as he could. Our one aim in life must ever be to follow the will of God, and to walk in those ways in the which He has pre-ordained for us to walk. Many a Damascus oasis, where ice-cold waters descending from mountain ranges spread through the fevered air a delicious coolness, and temper the scorching heat by abundant verdure, tempts us to tarry. Many a Peter, well-meaning but mistaken, lays his hand on us, saying "This shall not be unto thee: spare thyself." Many a conspirator within the heart counsels a general mutiny against the lonely, desolate will. And it is well when the pilgrim of eternity refuses to stay short, in any particular, of perfect consecration and obedience to the extreme demands of God. When you go forth to go into the land of Canaan, do not rest until into the land of Canaan you come. Anything short of complete obedience nullifies all that has been done. The Lord Jesus must have all or none; and His demands must be fulfilled up to the hilt. But they are not grievous.

What a glorious testimony was that which our Master uttered when He said, "The Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." Would that it might be true of each of us! Let us

henceforth give to Christ our prompt and unlimited obedience; sure that, even if He bids us ride into the valley of death, it is through no blunder or mistake, but out of some sheer necessity, which forbids Him to treat us otherwise, and which He will ere long satisfactorily explain.

"Ours not to make reply, Ours not to reason why, Ours but to do and die."

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