

# He . . . Became Obedient'

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the moral glory of Christ's obedience and its significance for believers in their daily lives.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:2

**Topics:** "Christ's Obedience", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the moral glories of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the delicacy and refinement of language used by the Holy Spirit to portray His majesty, grace, and universal glory. Through Philippians 2, we see the unparalleled representation of Christ's obedience, from His eternal past in the form of God to His humble obedience even unto death on the cross, resulting in exaltation and universal acknowledgment of His Lordship. Just as Christ learned obedience and became obedient, believers are called to obedience and subjection, following His example and reflecting His character in every aspect of life, relationships, and faith.

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## Transcript

When the Holy Spirit speaks of the moral glories of Jesus Christ, there is a delicacy of expression and refinement of language which, though very simple, is altogether Divine, and in a world which is a compound of Assyrian haughtiness and Babylonish corruption, we are apt to be so affected as to be unable to discern their rich yet lowly beauty, and to be rendered powerless to answer to the Word which says, "Beholding the glory of the Lord."

An artist, anxious to obtain his friend's approval of a beautiful picture he had finished, arranged a time for him to view it. When he arrived, he was left waiting in a small room with the blinds drawn. After a while he was taken to see the artist's work where the light of day so fell upon the picture that all the chief features of it were clearly shown to the fullest advantage. At once the visitor distinguished these, and was charmed with the result of his friend's labours, "But why did you leave me in that dark room?" he enquired afterwards. "Ah," replied the artist, "I knew you would not be able to discern the points which I wanted you to see in the picture immediately after coming through the busy city with its glare and rush, so I purposely arranged for you to be kept waiting where the effect of these would be removed from your vision!" That is just the reason why we also need to be withdrawn from world-influences, so that we may be able to behold and admire the finer shades of the Lord's glory which have such a transforming effect upon us. He may well say to us today, "Be still and know that I am God."

In Philippians 2, where we read of our Lord Jesus Christ "becoming obedient," we have portrayed by the Holy Spirit of God a marvellous representation of His majesty, lowly grace, and universal glory, unsurpassed elsewhere. Our thoughts become engaged with the commanding and central figure, that of Christ Jesus our Lord. In the eternal past of sublime and unsullied holiness and beauty, He is shown to us as "subsisting in the form of God" (v. 6, N.Tr.) and then, taking part in the history of time, we see Him in the likeness of men, as a bondman, and in wonderful grace humbling himself, "becoming obedient" even to death upon the cross. Then highly exalted by God, and given a Name above every other name, the coming day of glory is opened before our gaze, where His Name is proclaimed, and instantly the knees of every intelligent creature in the heavens, on the earth, and in the regions infernal, bow, and the tongues of all are moved to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory" (v. 11). We thus behold Him "in the form of God," "in figure as a man," and honoured in glory by all as "Lord."

We desire however, to call attention to that which the Holy Spirit Himself gives such touching distinction to in this passage--the obedience of this One who shares in Deity and is Lord of all. His Deity and Lordship throw into rich relief the moral glory of His obedience, as it is said, "Having been found in figure as a Man [He] humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross." It does not simply say, He obeyed, nor, He was obedient, but mark the delicate precision which depicts the truth to us, "becoming obedient." In Godhead majesty to whom could He be obedient? but in lowly grace, "taking a bondman's form," He could become obedient! As Paul here, so John in his Gospel tells us that the Word who was God (1:1), "became" flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth (v. 14). It should not read "was made"

Who could make God anything. No, the feature of moral glory here which commands our adoration is the beauty of His becoming obedient. For the creature subjection and obedience to God is his right and proper place, but to see the Creator coming down, and as a man become obedient, even to a cross of ignominy, shame, and abandonment, is a sight which may well move our hearts to worship, whilst we rejoice in the fact that He is now highly exalted and crowned with glory and honour upon the throne of God.

If not to the same measure, it is nevertheless to the same character of obedience, that the redeemed are set apart today, as we read "By sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience . . . of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2); and the Gospel has been sent to us, as well as the mystery of it revealed, for "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). We were once "sons of disobedience," for that characterized us until we were saved by grace (Eph. 2:2, 8; Col. 3:6); but now the apostle can exhort those who have received the salvation of God and that after speaking of the obedience of Christ as we have seen--"Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed . . . work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). The salvation is ours, and we work out in obedience, as God works in us by grace and power. The understanding of the truth and obedience to it may not be entered upon by us all at once. Paul speaks of the time when, in a certain case, the obedience of the Corinthian believers should be fulfilled (2 Cor. 10:6); and in the previous verse he tells us that the overthrowing of reasonings, which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, was accomplished not by carnal weapons but Divine, in view of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." To that end this devoted servant toiled and warred in the conflict of faith! Do we truly appreciate the glory of His obedience and seek that this should characterize us?--as we sing

"Jesus, the One who trod the earth,

The lowly subject One,

Obedience unto death was Thine,

God's well-beloved Son!"

It is indeed a sight of surpassing beauty to behold Him adorn the pathway of subjection and obedience as He passed onward to Calvary, and then ascend to the throne, and finally retain for ever as Man the place of subjection which He had taken in grace! As we have seen, He became obedient, and in the pathway of suffering which that involved, "though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and having been perfected, became to all them that obey Him, author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8-9). He, of course, was always perfect, but the lovely quality of obedience became His in the path of suffering, and He took back with Him to heaven that which He did not bring out of it. Son of God, born of the Virgin, His name was Jesus--Jehovah the Saviour--and Emmanuel--God with us; yet we see Him in the temple when twelve years old astonishing the teachers as He hears and asks them questions, and surprising Joseph and Mary by enquiring, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" We see Him doing always the things that were pleasing in His sight, but He went down with His parents "to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (Luke 2:51).

Subject to Joseph and Mary! Yet in the counsel of God all things are put in subjection to Him (1 Cor. 15:27), "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Yea, the church also, the assembly which is His body and His bride--is subjected to Christ! Indeed, there is only one exception, and that exception is a necessary one, for God Himself who put all things in subjection to Him could not Himself be in subjection to anyone. God, therefore, is the one exception. And the Son, who became Man, having learned obedience in the place of subjection which He took in grace, retains, we are told, that place of moral distinction for ever. When He is seen in the glory of universal supremacy, the glorifier of God, "then the Son also Himself shall be placed in subjection to Him who put all things in subjection to Him; that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). What a glorious result to His path of subjection and obedience! If we, as the assembly, are subjected to Christ, then we are given the high honour of holding as to Him the wonderful place which He Himself retains for ever as to God. What a beautiful distinction is this, granted also to the woman in the assembly, and that as observed by the angels (1 Cor. 11:10), for she has her head covered; also to the believing wife marked by "the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price. For thus also the holy women who have hoped in God heretofore adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands" (1 Peter 3:4-5).

This much-to-be-desired distinction for God's pleasure, however, is not to be confined to a favoured few. If our Lord Jesus Christ became obedient, and learned obedience, taking the place of subjection in grace, surely all those who have been redeemed by His precious blood, sealed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and enabled therefore to behold His glory, are expected to be marked by the same character. How could they show forth His excellencies were it not so? Truly the flesh "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is useless, therefore, to endeavour to cultivate it. But the true believer on our Lord Jesus Christ is "not in the flesh but in the Spirit," and as led by the Spirit He becomes more like Christ day by day.

Adam's disobedience constituted the many sinners, and produced the "sons of disobedience," but by the obedience of Christ, not only will the many be constituted righteous and share in His glory by-and-by, but they are freed now to behold and delight in that which is pleasing to God, so as to reproduce it by the Spirit's grace and power. Believing children, therefore, are to be obedient and in subjection to their parents. Younger brethren are to be subject to the elder (1 Peter 5:5). Sisters are to "learn in quietness

and in all subjection." Servants are to be subject to their masters, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the ill-tempered" (1 Peter 2:18), for this is "acceptable, if one, for conscience' sake towards God, endure griefs, suffering unjustly." All of us when under the discipline of the One who loves us, whose sons we are, have the place opened to us of being "in subjection to the Father of spirits," and so to live and reap the peaceable fruits which follow. In regard to God's government also we are to recognize what He has ordained: "for there is no authority except from God," wherefore Titus is told to put believers "in mind to be subject to rulers, to authorities, and to be obedient to rule." And in regard to the grace of God known in redemption we are told to be subject one to another, showing all humility, for God giveth grace to the humble.

Obedience, then, is to mark us in every circle of relationship which is established of God, nor is the confused and unrighteous state of that which professes to be Christian to be allowed to rob us of answering to the revealed truth of God. Another has said, "The present state of affairs, in the midst of which we Christians of today are responsible to act in obedience to that truth as found in Scripture, renders much prayerful exercise upon our part necessary, lest we fail in its application." Let us never forget the glory of obedience, the beauty of it, the honour of it, yea, the pleasure God Himself finds in it, and the response He has given to the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ in exalting Him to His right hand. Let us not lose the present path of it by allowing our zeal to carry us outside the will of God. It was for this Samuel reproached Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Disobedience marks the many today even as the Spirit foretold in the Scriptures--disobedient to parents--disobedient to rule--disobedient to the Word; "we ourselves were sometimes disobedient," says Paul; but when the call came, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," he remarked. And before him numbers entered upon the path in response to the Gospel call, and even "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The Gospel and its mystery have the same end in view today. They are given for "obedience of faith" as we have seen. Soon the exercises of faith will be passed! Soon the hope which even now rejoices our hearts will be actually entered upon in glory! But meanwhile, with the glory of the One who has already reached the goal before us, may we so behold His excellencies that they may be reproduced in the Spirit's grace and power for the pleasure and glory of God.

"From glory into glory changed

Till we behold His face."

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