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We are again indebted to the poet, Cowper, for summing up the lessons of suffering in his poem:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

He plants His footsteps on the sea
And rides upon the storm.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace:

Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”

STANDING BEFORE THE LORD

W. WILCOX

(Deut. 5:31—33)

Revolting against the phenomenal accompaniments of the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, the Israelites had besought Moses that he might act as mediator between them and God and so, hearing the words being spoken by God, be able to communicate them to the people when the thunderings, thick cloud, and the great voice would be stilled.

In His mercy God signified His acquiescence in this arrangement and told the people to return to their tents, but Moses was commanded to be ready to stand before God and hear His commands.

1. *Presentation of Self before the Lord*

There is almost the isolation of the man of God from his brethren, who is stood apart as the man of God's choice, of His appointment and of His approval.

In our dealings with God, do we become alarmed at the thought of directness of approach to His Person, fearing lest He should break forth upon us because of our sin, our lack of diligence, our tendency to forsake His Truth? Or do we come with indifference to His Holiness, to His Majesty, to His Glory? Do we seek for some intermediary, lest we be overtaken by His judgement?

There is ever the individual call—"as for thee" . . . alone in His Presence, alone to hear His commands, alone to commune with Him as to the further conduct of His people and of their relationships with Him.

Moses is told to *stand* by the Lord—and so to remain for the time, while God was revealing Himself further to him—to stand was the position of waiting for the divine commission, but it was also a place of privilege for it was a place of nearness, a place in the Presence. Here he would feel the power of that Presence, and the grace of Him Who would speak with His servant face to face.

2. *Communication of the Divine Commands*

God speaks to His servant. The fact of communication is plainly stated, the means by which this communication was made are nowhere hinted at. God has many ways by which He can make known His Word, and convey His commands. It is not for us to query the means He uses; sufficient for us to know that the communication is from Him and as such is authoritative to us. It takes the form of commandments or direct rules, statutes—general laws and judgements—ordinances (R.S.V.) These are given for the obedience of His people and in such obedience they will find the benefits of the Divine ordering of their lives and conduct.

3. *Instruction of the People in the Ways of the Lord*

Moses was to teach the people what God communicated to him.

Here is one of the most important tasks laid upon the Lord's servants, viz., "to teach" others the ways of God. It is a ministry sadly lacking in our day. We get many who can make up and deliver quite acceptable addresses which please for the time being, but which are quickly forgotten having in them no real substance. It is important "to teach" God's Word, to teach the saints and even to teach the Gospel. Thus it will retain a grip on the minds of the taught and be of lasting value.

Much emphasis is laid on the method of making the Word

known, in the writings of the Apostles. But knowledge alone is of little value it must be accompanied by the exercise of mind and heart, resulting in a corresponding walk.

Moses is told to teach these commands that the people may do them, the commands as known and understood are to be translated into practice. Every day living is the sphere in which such translation is to be made known.

Christian living is one of the most important ways of communicating the Gospel in this our day. He who works by the side of others may show by his life what the Christian faith is, how it enters into every phase of his life, inspiring his thought, influencing his action and moulding his character.

With such a living example constantly before his eyes, the unbeliever may well be influenced to "consider his ways", and seek the help of the One Who can effect such a signal change of conduct in his comrade.

For the doer of that which is taught there is the reward of the promised inheritance. He is to possess the land promised aforetime to the fathers. "To possess" is not merely to own, but to enter into all that the land affords to them of home, of provision, of sustenance, of enjoyment.

To the believer the Lord Jesus said "This is eternal life, that they might know Thee". Eternal life which we "have" as God's gift, is realized in the "knowing" of God, in the coming into the good of the divine gift, in the enriching experience of "increasing in the knowledge of God". Do we possess our possession?

"Possess" is one of the key notes of this remarkable book: within the compass of these few verses and the opening verse of chapter 6 it occurs three times, stressing its importance and indicating the region of as well as the substance of the blessing God had designed for His people.

It is "in Christ", and "of Christ" that we find both the sphere and the substance of our blessing, the fulness of which constitutes our inheritance.

The teaching imparted is to find resultant effect in three spheres:

(a) *In the Realm of Action*, v. 32. "Ye shall observe to do

therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you". We have already seen this in connection with the teaching imparted to them—but here we may note;

(i) *It was to be a matter of Concern*—they were to *observe* to do. It was to become a considered way of life, merging into a habit of life, yet not an unthinking habit but a concern to continue to do as God had commanded. In the believer's life such concern springs from his love for his Lord (Jn. 14:15.) thus showing that that concern does not involve a constant bondage to legalistic demands, or obedience to traditions, but that it is rather a holy desire to be obedient to a holy love.

It was a concern which would take toll of their energies, in which the concern of the mind would be expressed in the daily activity of life. The mind guided and controlled would give itself only to such energies as would be compatible with the "teaching" which it had imbibed.

(ii) *It was a matter of Care*—care to do according to the commandment given. The action taken was not to spring from their own thinking, but to find its origin in what God had commanded. The Spoken Word of God would provide for them a guide to lead them in the way which it had itself inspired. They were exhorted to care that this should be so. Jesus later said to His disciples, "If a man love Me, he will keep My Word" Jn. 14:23. This perhaps covered a wider ground than that found in His commandments, for it included the whole tenor of all His Words and not merely such words as were direct commands.

Do we care to find in His Words the directing inspiration of our actions whether as individual believers, or in the corporate life of the Assembly? The Lord Jesus ever looked back to the written Word shewing that that Word was the basis of His actions which thus brought about their fulfilment, or He used that Word as His defence against the temptations of the evil one. Let us make that Word the continual companion of our lives so that, knowing its commands, its teachings and its tenor, we may act according to it and find it to be our champion when we come into the rigour of fierce temptations.

(b) *In the Region of Thought:* They were not to deviate from the commanded Word. They were not to "play fast and loose" with that Word, nor were they to decide on their actions by the general drift of the commands. What was commanded of God was to be regarded as of sacred import that not even the slightest deviation from it was to be tolerated. That this might be so, the thought-life must be right. There must be a right attitude to God—His might and majesty gave authority to His Word; His covenanted relationship with His people made obligatory such commands as that covenant necessitated: His goodness and beneficence shewn to them would lay claim upon them for dutiful observance of His commands.

There must also be right thoughts about His Word. The fact that it was *His* Word demanded their diligent observance of its tenets.

The fact that it was His Word *to them* would give them a pure delight as they carried out its demands.

(c) *In the Rule of Walk:* "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you".

(i) *It was a Commanded Walk*, it was not something that could be assumed at will, and desisted from at pleasure. It is too often seen among the people of God, that the commands of God are obeyed as a matter of convenience. When such commands run contrary to our bias, then we turn them aside, or explain away the directness of the command, or consign that portion to the Jews and so find an escape from its demands. Let us beware of such subterfuges and obey the Commanded Word.

(ii) *It is a Comprehensive Walk*, it is to be "in all the ways which God hath commanded you". It is easy to choose out certain ways, and fasten upon them as if they comprehended all the commands of God.

Certain groups of believers speak of baptism and the Lord's Supper as acts of obedience as if there were no other commands to be obeyed. We need to know and **obey all** that the Scriptures teach walking in *all* His Ways.

(iii) *It is a Conditioned Walk*, conditioned by His Commands and not by our desires, or standards of judgement, or denominational prejudices.

When the people of God so obeyed His Word there were promises of blessing—of life, of well-being, and of prolonged days.

Such ordering of our ways will ever carry the divine approval and the divine blessing, wherein we shall find developing spiritual life, enjoyed spiritual well-being, and continued enrichment in heavenly things.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

DR. JOHN BOYD

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said of the Lord Jesus Christ that though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience (5:8). Obedience is the duty of a servant. Let us then consider the Lord as Jehovah's Servant, who fully carried out His obligations.

The Hebrew word for servant (lit. one who works for another) is translated in the Septuagint by two Greek words, both of which the New Testament applies to the Lord Jesus Christ. In each word obedience is in evidence.

(1) *PAIS* (Matt. 12:18). This word, usually translated child, is from a root meaning 'to smite'. It indicates one who is chastened, one who receives disciplinary guidance—his past faults corrected, and instructions given him for the future. That is, he is told what he must do. Whilst the Lord had no faults to be corrected, He ever presented Himself as One who came into the world to do what His Father had told Him. He was the Father's serving-Son. Some forty-eight times in the Gospels He spoke of His having been sent of the Father, being always conscious of His mission into the world. He was sent to do the Father's will (John 4:34), to do the works the Father gave Him (John 9:4), to speak the Father's words (John 12:49). Concerning this mission He could say, 'I do always those things that please Him' (John 8:29).