

“The Value of Obedience”

We are getting closer! 11 days until our 2021 observance of Good Friday, the day Jesus died on the cross. Our Scripture lessons for today take us back 2000 years to the day leading up to the first Good Friday. Scripture tells us that Jesus is both true God and true man at the same time. As true God Jesus knew precisely what was coming – the heavy burden of every sinner’s punishment being placed on him alone, the unfair trials and mockery, the brutal suffering, the rejection by his Father, the humiliating and excruciating death. As true man, Jesus must have been looking with horror at what was facing him. The temptation must have been strong for Jesus to take a shortcut to the glory of Easter. How was he able to obey his Father’s plan? And even though it wasn’t pleasant, why did Jesus obey his Father’s will? Hebrews 5:7-10 answers those questions for us.

⁷ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

To be our Savior, Jesus whole life on earth required perfect obedience to God’s law and will. That’s an unbelievable amount of pressure! Not to mention he had the horror of Good Friday awaiting him. Instead of complaining that God’s plan was too tough to accomplish, Jesus committed himself to fulfilling his Father’s plan. Jesus didn’t take the easy road. He was going to need encouragement along the way, so he daily **“offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death” (vs. 7)**. Jesus wasn’t just mindlessly speaking memorized words. These were heartfelt and humble conversations with his Father. Prayers weren’t just an occasional thing for Jesus, but a necessary part of his regular routine that enabled him to be our Savior.

Jesus was 33 years old when he suffered and died on the cross. Why 33? Wouldn’t a 27 or 22 year old Jesus have been sufficient? I don’t think any of us would feel comfortable if Jesus was younger than 18 when he suffered and died, 18 being the age in our country when a person can legally vote and join the military. So wouldn’t an 18 or a 20 year old Jesus have been old enough to complete the plan of salvation? **“Although he was a son, he learned**

obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (vs. 8-9). This is one of those Scriptural concepts that we can't fully wrap our minds around. Jesus as true God was certainly ready at any time to complete the plan of salvation. But in order to be put under the authority of God's law, to be tempted to sin in every way like you and me, and to die as our substitute – Jesus needed to be true man. Apparently an 18, 20, 22, 27 year old Jesus was not ready to fulfill the plan of salvation. Jesus hadn't been **“made perfect”** yet by the sufferings he endured throughout his whole life on earth. “Made perfect” isn't the most helpful translation here. The Greek word used here can also mean “made complete.” God the Father was using the trials and tribulations of life to prepare Jesus for the fire of those last days before his death and Good Friday itself. From God the Father's viewpoint 33 years was the exact amount of time that Jesus needed to be our complete Savior, ready to face the most difficult thing anyone has ever had to face in the history of the world. Jesus would be able to draw strength from all the experiences he endured during his life on earth when the time came for him to endure the physical and emotional torture of his body on Good Friday. Jesus would be able to draw courage and perseverance from his life experiences when it came time to face the emotional and psychological torture of his soul in Hell on Good Friday.

Jesus whole life on earth could be described as perfect obedience. What is the value of Jesus perfect obedience? **“He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek”** (vs. 9b-10). By doing what his Father wanted him to do and by completing that plan perfectly, Jesus earned the right to be our Savior. Jesus could now be our **“high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”** In Old Testament times when people came to offer sacrifices to God at the temple, they could not approach God without going through the priest. Not only was the animal that died as the sacrifice a reminder that only the blood of a substitute can make things right between you and God, but also the priest needed to offer this sacrifice on your behalf. The priest served as a mediator between God and sinful man. Once a year only the High Priest could enter into the Most Holy Place of the temple where the Ark of the Covenant containing the 10 commandments was housed, the symbol of God's holy presence and perfect demands. In order to enter the presence of a perfect God the priest had to bring the blood of the scapegoat shed on behalf of sinners. Every priest in Israel came from the tribe of Levi. Jesus did not descend from the tribe of Levi, but the tribe of Judah. Jesus was going to be different from all the other priests who came from Levi. Jesus was going to be more like Melchizedek, the king/priest of Jerusalem that Abraham brought offerings to long before God instituted the priesthood through the tribe of Levi. Jesus would be a different kind of high priest, who would

walk into the courtroom of God the Father as the sinner's mediator and offer his own perfect blood to atone for every last sin of every last sinner. Jesus mediating work as our High Priest means that despite our sinfulness, each of us has access to enjoy a face to face existence with God in heaven forever.

The words "obedience" (vs. 8) and "submission" (vs. 7) tend to be words that people view as restrictive, burdensome, and old fashioned. Christians like us struggle with thinking like that at times as well. Yet consider the value of Jesus obedience and submission to his Heavenly Father's will. It is the source of our eternal salvation! It's the reason that when God looks at you and me he doesn't see sinners, but people who are perfectly obedient. It's the reason we enjoy the privilege of talking to God in prayer and he listens to us and answers us.

Let's remember the value of Jesus obedience and submission as we are asked to be obedient and submissive to God's Word in our own lives. Let us trust that it will go better for us and society now and for eternity if we follow God's way of doing things. Let's remember the value of Jesus obedience and submission as we are asked to be obedient and submissive to the challenges and hardships that God allows in our lives. Let us trust that these challenges and hardships will benefit us as they keep us focused on eternity and will serve to make us more complete and productive Christians on earth.

The words "obedient" and "submissive" aren't bad words. They are valuable words. Let's remember that. Amen.