

The Obedience of our Peace

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[0 : 00] And we turn in the Bible to the passage which I read, Mark 14.

And from verse 32 just to give us a focus to think about. And they went to a place called Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, Sitia, while I pray.

And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going a little further he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.

[1 : 03] I wonder if you've ever wondered what your purpose is. Has it ever crossed your mind what you're meant to be doing?

Why am I here? What is life all about? God, what am I meant to be doing for you? Have you ever wondered that yourself?

The shorter Catechism question 39 says, What is the duty which God requires of man? And it's a, it's a significant question and answer. What is the duty that God requires of man?

And the answer is the duty which requires, God requires of man as obedience to his revealed will, obedience to the revealed will of God.

That is our duty. What he requires is that obedience to him. And it's significant that before God gives the commandments, he shows himself as the one who has the right to command and to whom obedience is due.

[2 : 12] Because he gives the Israelites the 10 commandments before that he says to his people, I am the one who are, who you are to be obedient to.

Here is my law of the rescuing them from Egypt. Here is my law of that law, which says, said a lot about who God was and his character. And he said, I am the one who you are to be obedient to. Exodus 20 says, and God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. And then he gives the Lord through Moses.

He's rescued them. He's taken them out there. They're gone through the Red Sea. And then he says to him, this is the way that I want you to live. I want you to obey my commandments and I want you to be sort of light within the nations and what you live if you like.

I want you to reveal who I am to the rest of the nations that they might know and come to know me as their God as well. And of course they failed in that.

[3 : 14] But here's the one who they were to respect and to obey. God makes it clear that he and he alone is the one who deserves all respect.

Ecclesiastes 12, 13 says, fear God and keep us commandments. Fear God and keep us commandments.

Here's the one who's to be respected and obeyed. And he says, for this is the whole duty of man. This is what we are to do. We are to obey his commandments. We are to follow him. We are to do what he tells us to do, says the commandments.

Matthew 28, 18 says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And forgo and make disciples of all nations, Jesus says, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

[4 : 13] And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. But there's something else that the Bible tells us. There's something else that the Bible makes it clear to us and makes it clear to the Israelites as well.

And that is that it's not possible through obedience to the law to be saved by God. And we got that. We're going to get that really, really clear tonight.

It was the Israelites that were rescued first from Egypt. They were taken from Egypt. And then God said, this is the way that I want you to live. It wasn't the other way around.

It wasn't the case of him saying, here is my law. I want you to follow my law and then you will be saved. He doesn't work like that. He rescues us and then he requires us to follow him and obey him.

So it makes it clear that salvation is not possible through obedience to the law. We're saved and then we're given the law. And the Bible also tells us that Jesus came and he lived the perfect life and he fulfilled the law in our place.

[5 : 24] The Bible tells us about Jesus. He is the one who came. He fulfilled the law. He lived the perfect life, that life that we couldn't live.

And hence we ought to look to him as our Lord and Savior, as the one who lived that life that we couldn't live. And so the obedience of Jesus, and that's what we're going to be thinking about tonight, the obedience of Jesus.

We're going to turn to Mark's Gospel in chapter 14 and we're going to notice his obedience and that obedience that leads to peace. If you've been here for the last few days, you've been thinking about the peace which is possible in and through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And tonight we notice the obedience and to peace, the obedience of Jesus. And we notice, first of all, obedience yet deeply troubled.

Obedience yet deeply troubled and we transport ourselves forward to the Garden of Gethsemane. As Jesus is contemplating the death on the cross, he is with his disciples and he finds himself in the garden deeply troubled and deeply distressed.

[6 : 42] And we read in verse 33, and he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death, remain here and watch.

And we see his distress in the language. Very simply, we see his distress in the language there. He is troubled. He is not comfortable in and of himself.

He is not in a great place here in the garden. But we also see his distress in the fact that he takes three of his closest friends and he says to his friends, I want you to pray for me.

Now in the West we don't really get this very clearly. I don't think anywhere. We're very individualistic. We're very, very, very self-centered very often.

We're in other cultures. They talk about the collective and they talk about the family and they talk about the community. Jesus says, and he goes with his three friends and he says to them, I want you to pray for me.

[7 : 44] I'm in trouble here. I need your help. Please pray for me. And I wonder dear friends tonight, how many of us say to our friends, can you pray for me?

If Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, can say to his mortal friends, will you pray for me my dear friends? Is that something that we do?

Is that something that we call upon people to do for us in our trouble? Perhaps you're somebody who doesn't go through any trouble. I don't think so. We find ourselves in situations where perhaps we're at the end of our tether.

We find ourselves in situations where we know not where to look next. I've got this meeting next week and I'm worried about it.

I don't know how it's going to go. Or I've got to speak to a family member this next week and I haven't spoken to them for a long time. And the last time we were together, things didn't go too well.

[8 : 56] Do you mind praying for me? Would you mind lifting me up to the Lord and pray? He asks his friends, will you pray for me?

We also see his distress in this, what is a great paradox of the creator of the universe asking mere mortals to pray for him.

The one who created the universe, the one who created the heavens and the earth, the one who has always been there, the one who has never had a beginning.

He says to mere mortals, he says, would you pray for me? I'm in distress. Would you pray for me?

The main sort of indicator that he is in trouble, he's in distress is his prayer, the prayer itself.

And we notice in verse 35 that he throws himself down to pray. That's not a sign of a man who has no troubles in the world. It's a sign of a man who is desperate for the help of God.

[10:06] He throws himself down to pray and he speaks to his father. Father, is there no other way that this can take place? Is there no other way?

We see the intensity of his struggle as he literally wrestles with God at this time, praying to him. And of course there's the prayer itself as he calls out to his father, have a father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

Is there no other way, dear father, that this can take place? As he thinks about what is to come, is there any sort of a way that we can do this that might be a little bit different, dear father?

Would you help? Would you change your mind in this perhaps? Is there no other way that we might find peace in this world, or give them peace, those who are sinners?

[11:07] Is there no other way that we can think about that they might know you and be in relationship with you, that they might know that peace?

A couple of things that we need to look at. He is obedient and yet deeply troubled at this point. But we have to ask ourselves a question and it's a really, really important question. And that is, what's he doing there? What is Jesus doing in the garden at this point, in his distress and in his pleading?

What's Jesus doing in the garden at this point? And the answer is quite simple, my dear friends, is that is fallen humanity.

That's your sin and my sin. That's what he's doing there. Again, the question 19 of the Catechism, what misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

[12:09] The fall brought upon mankind, loss of communion with God and his wrath and curse, so that we are justly liable to all miseries in this life to death itself and to punishment in hell forever.

That lack of peace that we've been thinking about, that separation from God, that damnation under the wrath of God because of our sinfulness and because the separation from God.

So Jesus will become our substitute. That is what he's doing there. He's contemplating becoming our substitute, taking our place on the cross, isn't he?

He's going through the mind that he's going to be dying on that cross, that horrendous of deaths that even the Roman citizens weren't allowed to die by.

Used to be crucified on the cross. Used to become our substitute. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, God made him who had no sin to be sinned for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, that great exchange that takes place, the evangelists call it the great exchange where the sin of the world, the sin of humanity, your sin and my sin is imputed to Jesus Christ and he becomes sin in our stage.

[13:27] And of course the other side to that is that those who believe in Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us, that God looks at our lives with all our brokenness and all our sinfulness and all that we do in our lives.

He looks at us and because of what Jesus has done on the cross, he sees the purity and the beauty and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the great exchange.

He sees the righteousness of Jesus when he looks at your life dear friends. It's incredible. It's amazing.

It's inspiring. It's wonderful. Christ becomes sin for us.

And so we can begin to think and imagine what Jesus is going through and understand why he is so troubled at this point.

[14:37] He's on the way to the cross because of your sin and my sin. And sin is the great lavalier, isn't it? Whether it's the Queen or the President of the United States or the President of China, if you're born into a poor family or if you're born into a rich family, we're all sinners.

It is the great lavalier, isn't it? Every single one of us, there is no one who is not sinful. Every single one of us is sinful. We're born like that.

It's not like we do something wrong. It's not only that we do things wrong. It's the fact that we are born rebellious against God. That is who we are.

And isn't it true that one of the great problems today is that people don't associate sin with God.

They might see sin as simply making a mistake or having bad feelings about ourselves.

[15:40] And yet what is sin? Sin is missing the mark and missing the standard of God, isn't it? Sin is a direct affront to God himself.

It is an affront to his character. That is what sin is. It is an affront and an affront to the character of God. Martin Luther once said that he was terrified by the moral presence of God.

He was terrified by the moral presence of God. So it's because of our sin that Jesus finds himself where he is.

And that points to our need for a new heart, really, dear friends. It points to the need for every single one of us having that need for heart surgery.

I know heart surgery now is something that is fairly common. It's a common operation in the hospitals. But spiritually speaking, we need a new heart.

[16:44] We need a heart transplant. That is what every single one of us needs because of our sin and because we're under the anger of God because of our sin. We need heart surgery.

Jeremiah 7.9, God says, the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

And then later on in Jeremiah we're told, I will give them a new heart. I will give them a new heart. But there's something else here. We've seen that Jesus is there because of fallen humanity.

But we see something else here and that in his suffering we get to understand something of the trouble and the difficulties that Christians go through.

[17:47] Matthew 16, 24, then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Our trouble is nothing like what Jesus goes through. Absolutely nothing like. And yet as the disciples of Jesus Christ, we are told as we've heard over the last couple of days that our lives will not be a bed of roses as the believers and followers of Jesus Christ.

Because we are those who are to take up our crosses. We are those to take up our crosses and follow Jesus and that is sometimes painful.

It's not easy to follow Jesus. It's a painful process. It's a difficult process. It's a hard process most of the time.

Donald McClod says this about Jesus. He says his whole life from the cradle to the tomb was suffering. From the moment of his birth Jesus was identified with sinful humanity.

[18:58] And all the circumstances of his life reflected the fact that he was bearing the sin of the world in solidarity with us. He was the man of sorrows.

In solidarity with us, he was the man of sorrows. We've seen that there is a cost to the peace that we have as the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a cost. Not only the death of Jesus, that is the big cost. But the cost to you and to me as well. As we forsake all that was in our lives before.

Not the good things, not those things that have been given by God. But those things that are sinful. Those things that perhaps we enjoy doing beforehand.

And God says I want you to leave that side and I want you to follow me. And that is not an easy process. We notice secondly the obedience of Jesus yet pleading for another way.

[20:10] The obedience of Jesus and yet pleading for another way. In verse 36 he said, Father all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.

Yet not what I will but what you will. Is there no other way, Father, that this can take place? Is there no other way that they might be saved?

That they might be rescued from their own sin? Father is there no other way that this can take place? And to follow a thread of Donald MacLeod's.

We ask the question why is the prayer not answered by God the Father? Why does he not answer Jesus?

Why did he not take the cup from him? What is the cup? The cup is all everything surrounding the death and struggle and suffering and the death of Jesus. Would you take this cup away from me? He says.

[21:10] And why is it that the Father does not take that particular cup away from Jesus? Why is it not that the Father says okay son we can simply just forget about that sin.

It doesn't really matter. And he cannot do that because he is a holy God isn't he? He cannot simply look away from sin. He needs to do something about it.

But the wish of Jesus is clear take away this cup if possible he is saying that is his request. Would you take this cup away?

He wants God's will to be different doesn't he? He wants the will of the holy God to be different. Is there no other way he says?

And Donald MacLeod says this. He says for a moment he stands with the millions of his people who have found God's will almost unendurable, shrunk from the work given them to do, shuddered at the prospect of the race set before them and prayed that God would change his mind through the grief if it's about you at this moment, through the cancer diagnosis, through the motor neuron disease, through the turmoil that is perhaps going on in your family, perhaps you've already said to God is there no other way God's for me?

[22 : 39] Is there no other way that this can take place? And there's a sense in which God is saying I never lose control my dear child.

You are in my will even in your time of struggle, even in your suffering. I am doing this because I love you and I'm shaping you and molding you into the likeness of my son because I love you. He stands with the millions of his people who have found God's will almost unendurable, shrunk from the work given them to do, shuddered at the prospect of the race set before them and prayed that God would change his mind.

Why is it this way dear father? Why is it that you would have me go through this? Whatever it is in your life. Have you said that? Are you saying that right now?

And there's something else that Donald MacLeod brings out here and when you read it you think yes, yes, there's so much truth in it.

[23 : 58] And that was this. Why is Jesus so, and he uses the phrase here, discomposed in the situation? Why is he so discomposed in the garden of God's heavenly?

And there's a sense in which Jesus himself loses it in a sense, crying out to his father, pleading to his father that there might be another way and we can contrast him between his discomposure and the composure of thousands of his martyred followers as they face the prospect of sure and certain death.

Thousands of martyrs before have had that peace which you've been thinking about on their deathbed, have had something about them that others have looked at their lives and thought, well there's something about that person which is supernatural perhaps.

They have a peace and a rest about them that is attractive to me. I want something of that. When Deirdre Bonhoeffer, Deirdre Bonhoeffer was a pastor in the Second World War during the Second World War who spoke up against Hitler and the Nazi regime.

When Deirdre Bonhoeffer was executed in Flossenberg concentration camp in April 1945, the camp doctor who didn't know who he was, he didn't know this Deirdre Bonhoeffer.

[25 : 26] Watched him take off his prison guard, kneel on the floor and pray and this doctor says I was deeply moved when I saw him pray.

I was deeply moved by his actions and his witness and the way that he knelt down and he prayed to his God. He says I was deeply moved. He wrote by the way this unusually lovable man prayed. So devout and so certain that God heard his pray and Macleod goes on to say why then is Jesus so distraught here?

Why is he so discomposed? Why is he so troubled in that God not get so many? It can only be because he faced more than martyrdom and more than death.

As he contemplated that cross, as he contemplated for the first time being separated from the Father on that cross, for the first time in eternity past that no longer would he be with his Father.

[26 : 30] That's what he was thinking about. And that brings us thirdly to the obedience of Jesus unto death.

The obedience of Jesus unto death because God's justice still needed to be satisfied. The justice of a holy God needed to be satisfied on that cross.

And this reminds ourselves what was still to happen in Romans 3. Paul says in verse 25, God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.

He did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus was so discomposed because he was to face the wrath and the justice of a holy God on that cross.

[27 : 49] That's what he was thinking about. That's what he was contemplating. The anger of a holy God, meet it out on him that you and I might have a life and have it to the full.

There is Jesus thinking about this moment, thinking about that cross, thinking about the suffering that he would go through, thinking about the wrath and the anger of a holy God being meted out on him out of love for you and for me.

He dies on the cross. But not only does he die, after three days he rises again.

Dear friends, it is all about the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is not about your good works or my good works. It's not about us being good people because we cannot be good people. We cannot obey the law that God has set for us because we miss that standard every single moment of the day. But Jesus has been perfectly obedient, even obedient unto death, believing and following the one who was perfectly obedient makes us right with a holy and righteous God.

[29 : 28] Our greatest problem, dear friends, is not terror. Our greatest problem is not the snow. Our greatest problem is not ISIS.

It's not your physical illness. Our greatest problem is our ideal nation away from God. Our separation from a holy God from birth.

That is our greatest problem. And our greatest need is the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. And I wonder tonight, dear friends, if you have Jesus in your life, I wonder if you have bowed the knee and asked him and accepted him into your life.

Have you done that yet? And what are you waiting for if you haven't done that yet? You've heard the gospel. You've heard the cry. You've heard the invitation of God.

He says in Revelation 3.20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into them and eat with him and he with me.

[30 : 30] That is the invitation for us, every single one of us tonight, Christians and not Christians, that we would not leave here simply forgetting everything that we've heard tonight.

But we would ask ourselves the question, where am I with God? And this peace which we've been hearing about, and this peace that is offered to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, where are you looking to find that peace in your life if it is not in Jesus?

Is it in alcohol? Is it in money? Is it in your own cars? Are you looking for a peace in relationships? Perhaps you've been through relationships in your life and there you are looking for that peace which you will never find if it is not in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He offers that peace to us tonight, to every single one of us and He offers it freely. I wonder dear friends, beloved, do you have that peace?

Do you have the peace of God in your life? Jesus says, you will have trouble in this world, but in me you will have peace.

[31 : 40] In me you will have peace. It's by our heads in prayer. Father God, we thank you so much for your son Jesus.

We thank you so much dear Lord for what you have done for us by his death on the cross.

We thank you so much Heavenly Father for the fullness of life that we can have. Lord, we pray for those tonight who are perhaps hurting.

We pray for those Lord who have come here tonight with many, many things going on in their lives, difficult things, trouble, hard times.

And Lord we pray that they would be comforted knowing that you understand, knowing that you have been there yourself and you know what it is to suffer and to struggle.

[32 : 52] Lord we pray for that compassion. We pray dear Lord for those who do not know you tonight. We pray that even tonight that their eyes would be opened, that they would behold your glory and see their need for you.

Lord we pray that as your people we would be those who live faithful lives resting and trusting in you, recognizing constantly our need for you.

Lord bless us we pray. Forgive us all that is amiss in our lives. And we ask it in Jesus and for his sake. Amen.