

Obedience, the Condition of Blessing

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon underscores the critical role of obedience in the life of a Christian as a reflection of genuine faith and relationship with God.

Duration: 55:13

Scripture: Deuteronomy 11:27, Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:12

Topics: "Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's will. He highlights how Jesus' obedience to God's will led to his fullness and power. The preacher also emphasizes that obedience to God leads to further revelation of His will, while disobedience hinders spiritual growth. He uses the verse Romans 5:19 to explain how through one man's disobedience (Adam), many were made sinners, but through the obedience of Jesus, many can be made righteous. The preacher encourages Christians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who works in them to will and do His good pleasure.

Transcript

I would like to take for the basis of our message this afternoon one verse from the passage of scripture which Dr. Orr Ewing was reading to us. Romans, chapter 5, and verse 19, a verse which contains the very heart of the message of the Christian faith, a verse which lies at the root of all Christian experience, a verse which is absolutely basic for your life and testimony. Romans 5, 19, For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

That text opens up for us today and for us at this convention a vast subject. I wish to introduce it this afternoon and enlarge upon it a little from another aspect when it is my privilege to minister the word this evening. It opens up the subject which I'm afraid many of us as Christian people have either ignored or forgotten.

And I'm afraid that some of us have found it much less inconvenient to forget it. May I ask you a question? Don't answer it aloud, but answer it in your mind. What place do you think obedience has in God's plan for your life? Is this optional or is it essential? Is it something I may choose at certain points and reject in others? Or does salvation involve absolute obedience? If it does, then how can salvation be by faith and faith alone? To help in answering that vital question and to get at what I believe is the root of a great deal of superficiality in Christian testimony today, I want to ask you to think with me for a little while upon this

tremendous verse of Scripture.

Just for a moment, let's remind each other about the place which obedience has in the word of God. As I was preparing this message and praying about it, I was quite struck with the central place which obedience has in the Bible. I remind you of a few texts.

You may like to note them so that you may consider them by yourself on another occasion. Genesis 2, 16, the very beginning of the story of human history, the Lord God commanded the man, saying, and in chapter 3, verse 11, Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? In other words, the one condition for the enjoyment of relationship with God was obedience to his authority. And at the close of the story of redemption, in Revelation 22 and verse 14, blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have a right to the tree of life.

In other words, it is only obedience to God which gives us access to life and to his favour. And if you ask me how the disobedience which took place at the beginning of history was changed to obedience which opens the way to the presence of God again for us, I point you to this text. As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous.

In other words, the whole redemption of Jesus Christ and the whole message of the cross lies in restoring obedience to its proper place. The greatness of God's salvation is that he brings us back to a life of total obedience to his will. And it's only when we live that life that we can live to his glory.

And furthermore, it's only when we live that life in submission to his absolute authority that we have any right to expect that one day we shall share heaven with Jesus Christ. Modern psychology has indoctrinated this generation to believe that self is basically good and all we need is refining and educating and polishing up and religion. The Bible says that self is essentially sinful, arrogant, proud, selfish and self-willed.

And the only way of realising self and realising the purpose for which we are born is in unconditional surrender to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. And please, my dear friend, I am not today preaching some, in quotes, second experience of grace. I am preaching no more than what is the gospel.

And the tragedy of much modern preaching is that in order to get decisions for Christ, a term I hate which I don't find in my Bible, in order to get so-called decisions for Christ we make the way of salvation as cheap and as easy and as simple as possible. And the way is so broad that you can't distinguish the believer from the unbeliever. It is not my decision for Christ which decides my eternity, it is the direction of my life that decides my destiny.

And if you have made a decision for Christ, beloved, which hasn't been followed by the direction of your life in submission to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, it is not valid in terms of New Testament salvation. For if faith is without works, it is dead. And if belief is not followed by obedience, it is not real.

He that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. May I, may I therefore underline this from Scripture a moment, taking you through one or two examples. I recall, for instance, the story of Abraham.

Genesis 22 and verse 18 says, By faith Abraham obeyed God. And then God said to him, In thy seed shall all nations be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. And there's the whole basis of a missionary call.

In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. Why? Because you believe me? No, because you obeyed me. And if I would be a channel of blessing, and if the Holy Ghost would get through your personality and mine, it can only be when he gets through a submissive character.

I remind you again of Moses. Exodus 19, for, If you will obey my voice, indeed, ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. And the Lord Jesus supported all that and said, Henceforth I call ye not servants, but friends.

Ye are my friends if you obey my word. It's a wonderful thing to be a servant of the Lord, but my, if the Lord can make me a friend, I'm all for pressing in, aren't you? To become just a bit more than a servant, but to be his friend. God spoke to Moses about life in the land and said, Deuteronomy 11, 27, I set before you a blessing if you will obey and a curse if you will not obey.

Do I speak to any Christian to whom this word comes like an arrow from heaven of spiritual conviction? And you have known through years of Christian experience almost the sense of the curse of God upon you, even though you're a child. And if you were brave enough, beloved, to look into the reason for it all today, you would find it rise deep down in the root of rebellion that's still in your heart. I remind you of the words of Saul, or at least of the word that the Lord spoke to Samuel about Saul, 1 Samuel 15, 23.

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he hath not performed my commandment. And then Samuel said to him, To obey is better than sacrifice, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee. And if I fail to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, though I may never lose my relationship which is established at the moment of my commitment to him when I was born again, if at any moment in the course of my Christian life I resist his sovereignty on any issue, at that moment he will remove me from my sphere of service and I'm put on the shelf.

Oh, I could stay in the pastorate and could preach the same sermons and I could stay on the mission field or teach in the Sunday school, but from the heaven's standpoint I've been removed, for from me has been taken all Holy Ghost unction which he will only give to the submissive life. That's what Paul feels when one day in writing to the church at Corinth, he said, and I quote Philip's letters to young churches, 1 Corinthians chapter 9, I am no shadow boxer, I do not beat the air, I buffet my body, I deal it blow upon blow, lest having proclaimed the rules to others I should be disqualified. Oh, the tragedy of so many Christians today who in the sight of heaven have disqualified themselves for Christian work because at some issue they've said no to the authority of the Lord Jesus.

And then I remind you that the Lord Jesus himself takes up this theme and says, not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father. If ye love me, said the Lord Jesus, ye will keep my commandments. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him.

And Peter says, God has given the Holy Ghost to them that obey him, Acts 5:42. You want power? We want liberty, we want freedom, we want deliverance. A month ago, traveling through the jungles of Congo, rushing from one mission station to another just two days before Congo got its independence, everywhere we went there were Congolese people on the roadside and they were shouting the Congolese word for freedom, huru, huru.

Two more days, huru. Freedom, what for? Lawlessness. License, tragedy, chaos.

Brother, the grace of God which met you and the blood of Christ which saved you didn't meet you for lawlessness, it met you for submission, total submission to his sovereignty. Jesus, brother James says in his letter, be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves, James 2.22. That's the place of obedience in the word of God. Oh, my dear Christian friend, what place has it got in your life today? The enjoyment of the blessings of God's grace are away beyond the reach of so many of us, because we've never made obedience what God intends it to be, the starting point, the secret of continuance and the goal of our Christian living.

Oh, but then wait a minute, you say, Mr. Preacher, this is impossible. We've at last found somebody at Keswick who isn't sound, he's preaching law not grace. Wait a moment.

I was down in the southern part of the United States some time ago and I ran into trouble along this line from a group of young people who were very angry with me. They came up to me after the message and they said exactly that thing, you are not preaching grace, you're preaching law. And one of them, a young lady whose age, I'm very bad at guessing, but I would think somewhere in the early 20s, suddenly said to me, you don't know my Savior.

Oh, I said, really, tell me about him. Oh, she said, you don't know my Savior. Well, come on, I said, what's he like? Oh, he said, she said, he's so wonderful.

Well, I said, I think my Savior's wonderful too, tell me about you. Have you got a different one? Why is he so wonderful? Oh, she said, he forgives me so easily. Really? I said, that's interesting.

What do you mean? Well, she said, do you know, I'll tell you a secret. Since I've been a little girl, I've been an awful liar. Really? I said, how long have you been a Christian? Oh, since I was 15.

Really? And I said, you're still telling lies? Oh, yes, more so than ever now. Really? I said, that's, that's interesting. When did you tell the last one? I told an awful lie, she said, this morning before I came to church about what I was doing last night.

I told a lie to my mother. Well, I said, what did you do about it? Oh, she said, I, I knelt down beside my bed and I said, Lord Jesus, I'm so sorry that I've told another lie, but you know, I keep on doing it and I can't help it. Now, Lord Jesus, thank you for your forgiving grace and for the cleansing of your blood.

And I came away to church so happy. She said, it's wonderful to have a Savior like mine. And I looked at her and said, I do not know your Savior, lady.

And furthermore, you don't know mine. And if you'll pardon me from saying so, your Savior is not the one of the Bible. Mine is.

And my Bible says, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall I, who am dead to sin, continue any longer therein? Am I going to make a scapegoat of the grace of God to permit me going on living like the very devil and believing everything that a fundamentalist ought to believe? And my behavior lived on such a low level? Oh, surely not. You say it's impossible to obey.

Listen, friend, listen. The disobedience of Adam shut the gate to heaven to all of us, but the obedience of Jesus Christ has opened it again. And that obedience of the Lord Jesus, worked out in your life and mine by the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost, is the way back to the favor of God.

Let me speak to you therefore quickly a moment concerning what I have called the power of the obedience of Jesus. If we see the place of obedience in Scripture and find ourselves humiliated at the thought of our own disobedience, may I ask you just a moment, examine with me how it is that the obedience of Christ is so powerful that it can communicate victory in life and deliverance to you. As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one the many shall be made righteous.

Would you consider that text with me in detail for a moment? It must be an awfully sleepy afternoon for you, bless you. I thought most people would be on the lake today, but you're here, so I hope you're keeping awake. But I want you to consider this text with me rather carefully for a moment because it's so important.

Do you notice the contrast between the disobedience of Adam, which resulted in our condemnation, and the obedience of Christ which results in our righteousness? Through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners. How did that happen? How many? All of us. Well, how did that happen? Because of a connection we had with the event when it took place.

You see, we were all there. Oh, but I was only born fifty years ago, you say. Doesn't matter, you were there at the time.

Seminally, the whole human race was there. And the act of arrogance which our first father committed imparted to the whole human race a nature which is anti-God. As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

Judicially, I'm involved in that awful act of aggression against the authority of our God and of our Lord and of our Creator. Judicially, I'm involved in it, and if I object to that, then I say, experimentally, I'm involved in it too. Because there isn't one individual anywhere here in the tent or anywhere in the world that hasn't said amen to Adam's act of aggression against God.

And there isn't a moment in our... there hasn't been one life here, but there's been a moment when we've said no to his authority, and we've demanded the right of self-expression. And we've insisted upon our own way. I believe it was Hudson Pope himself, our beloved friend who's with us this week, I believe it was he who used to say, and I always found it a bit of a tongue twister, but I understood it in the end, that nobody becomes a sinner because of the sins we commit.

But we commit sins because we are by nature sinners. And the essence of sins in the plural is S-I-N in the singular, S-I-N, and the center word is I. And there is no genuine experience of redemption until the I has been crushed and the Jesus Christ has been enthroned. And that's the whole problem, may I say it lovingly, that so many of us have professed so much and have been emotionally stirred up at conventions and conferences many a time and have been intellectually convinced, but there's a big capital I still on the throne that demands its own way and insists on being proved right and other people being proved wrong and demands recognition and praise.

What an ugly thing it is. That's why you have missionary work split in two and church leadership. So constantly guilty of fraction and problems and trouble.

But listen, through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, and the one thing that God asked of his creatures was obedience, for that's the only way we can glorify him. And the one secret of the

power of sin in the life of a child of God is the cause of disobedience in the life. And the whole power of sin working in a man has its root in the fact that he is a child of disobedience.

And by nature he's got a rebellious heart, and in spite of his profession of conversion and faith in Jesus Christ, that self has never been broken. Though he claims forgiveness of sins, he's got no experience of deliverance from sin. And therefore if there's to be redemption at all, the one thing that Jesus must do is somehow to remove the dominion of disobedience from the human soul, the root of all our misery, and restore us to a life that's submitted to the will of God.

I tell you that all theory of the cross and all understanding of Calvary, which doesn't strike right at the root of all human misery, and which doesn't dethrone self and deal with the capital I in us, anything less than that is totally inadequate for an experience of the grace of God and of his delivering power. So the Lord Jesus came, and oh bless his name, he was obedient until death, even the death of the cross. And by the one man's disobedience the many have been made sinners.

We've given a sanctuary. What's the answer to the reign and rule of the dominion of this proud self? So, says Paul, by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous. How does that happen? Listen, in the mind and in the sight of heaven and of a holy God, the disobedience of Adam has been replaced by the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And by that obedience we are made righteous. We're accounted righteous. And when we receive him as our Savior and our Lord, we receive to live within us a life of submission to his will, a life of obedience.

I hope that this becomes a vital, living, pressing, urgent reality to everyone in this tent this afternoon, because when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you don't receive simply life and get your sins forgiven and get saved from hell and go to heaven. That's not the gospel. That's the result of the gospel.

If you're born again, you have received a life which can only live on one principle. It's a life of submission in totality to the will of God. That's the life you receive.

That's the Holy Spirit within. And implanted into your nature is a new nature, the very life of Jesus Christ, which humbled himself and was made obedient unto death. You see, the disobedience of Adam reigned in the whole human race and brought death because of disobedience.

But now the obedience of Jesus Christ reigns in the life of a child of his and brings righteousness and life and to receive Christ is to receive into my heart the power of a new nature which can give me power to obey God in all things, if I'm willing. So I would say to you that the obedience of Jesus Christ to death is the only way by which any of us begin to live as Christians. It's his obedience that made it possible.

It's the Lord stepping from heaven to Calvary. It's the Lord counting himself not a thing to be grasped after, to be equal with God, but coming a way, way down the ladder until he touches rock bottom. It's that submission of God's perfect man that opens the way back to heaven for us all.

But if that's the way into life, I want to say that your obedience to the Lord Jesus is the only way of evidencing that life in reality. The greatest thing about a family is family likeness. You often hear said about somebody, you know, that person is the image, that boy is the image of his father.

There's a family likeness. Listen, the one thing that distinguishes an unregenerate man from the Christian is his disobedience to the Lord. That's the family likeness.

The principle of pride, the principle of self, the principle of vindication, the principle of self-centered living, this, this is the family likeness of the child of hell. The one thing that distinguishes a Christian, a genuine Christian from an unbeliever, is his family likeness to the Lord Jesus as he lives his life in submission to the will of God. There, there beloved, there at the very heart of the word of God is the distinguishing mark.

It's not what I believe. It's not a statement of creed. It's not that I believe my Bible intellectually from beginning to end.

It's not that I'm a master of prophecy. It's not that I can understand eschatology. It's not that you could preach like the archangel Gabriel.

It is, do you obey the Lord Jesus Christ? Family likeness, submission. If you ask me, what does that involve? What does that involve in daily life? I turn you to the pattern of it as expressed in the life of our precious Savior, and give you very quickly and simply one or two things which marked out the life of Jesus, and which must mark out the life of every one of his followers if those lives of ours are going to stand the test on that day when we meet him face to face. May I say to you in the first place here, as I think of the pattern of obedience in Christ, that his obedience was a life principle.

It wasn't just a single act, nor was it a series of acts, but it was an attitude of his life. He says, I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. He lived for that one purpose, and the controlling power of the life of our blessed Lord was submission.

He never permitted one rival to the will of God. Never for one moment. If he had, on any one issue, permitted any rival to the absolutely perfect will of his Father, there would never have been a Keswick Convention.

Not one of us would have been saved. He lived for one purpose, and that was to get the will of God, which was done in heaven, to be done in earth. And therefore I read of the early church absolutely consumed in the midst of pressures which were overwhelming, in the midst of opposition which I am sure has never been equal since in spite of all that goes on in the world today, in the midst of the totalitarian power of a Roman Empire which threatened to crush that little baby church out of existence.

And may I say there wasn't a DD among them. There wasn't a man of them who had a good education. There wasn't one of them who perhaps would pass muster for modern missionary recruits.

They'd probably all be rejected by missionary societies today. And that little baby church, with all the pressure of Rome determined to crush them out of existence, said, we must obey God rather than men. And because they did that, beloved, because they did that, why, heaven opened, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and the power of Rome was scattered.

It's my profound conviction that if you and I, let's begin right here, lived for just one week in total submission to the authority of Jesus Christ, I say, oh, what revival would break out. I long, oh, I long, and maybe this longing is shared by you. Couldn't we, in the course of a lifetime, which perhaps for some of us might be seventy-five years and some might be less, in which we spend, if, if, if we require eight hours in bed, in which we spend no less than twenty-five years unconscious, how I long that in the course of that life, Christian people, oh, beloved, couldn't we get away alone with God for one week, with no visitor but the Holy Spirit, and no book but my Bible? That would be even greater than a Keswick convention.

For such a man, I am convinced, if we had just one week out of all those years alone with God and the Holy Ghost and the Word, that man would either break up or break out to be a flame for God in these days. And we are perishing for lack of men with a flame and a passion. The Church is bogged down by its dead, orthodox fundamentalism, which has got no life because it isn't backed by obedient Christians.

The whole principle of the life of the Lord Jesus was utter submission to one principle, the will of God, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. It was not only a life principle, and let me put this aside lest you think this is a very grim situation. The obedience of the Lord Jesus was such a joy.

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. I delight to do thy will, O God. And the one thing that satisfied the hunger of the heart of our precious Lord was to do the will of God.

It refreshed him, strengthened him, and made him glad. Do you mean to tell me that in preaching a message like this that I am urging upon people a life of bondage and misery and restriction? That to obey God is going to be the end of everything? I enjoy, but I tell you it will be the beginning of you giving three leaps for joy in freedom to do the will of God. Work out your own salvation, says Paul to the church at Philippi.

Work it out with fear and trembling for, oh, what lovely words, it is God that worketh in you to will and to do his good pleasure. It is God by his Spirit in you, the obedient life within you, who works in you to make you love to do God's will. I believe that this whole convention and every speaker on this platform every year stands for this great fact that I would give you.

That the New Testament teaches not only that the Lord Jesus Christ forgives the penalty of our sin, not only does he deal with the guilt, and not only does he break the power of cancels sin, but, hallelujah, he takes away the love of sinning. You mean to tell me I've got to spend my life as a Christian secretly hankering after the things for which the blood of Jesus saved me? Do you mean to tell me that all through my life I've got to love secretly the thing that got me down and nearly ruined my life and landed me into hell? Oh, God forbid. God forbid.

He imparts to his child a life which longs after holiness and delights to do the will of God and enters into the thrill and the joy of victory in answer to his complete submission to our Father in heaven. Oh, yes. Any miserable souls around here today? Oh, brother and sister, I would like just to put my arm around you and love you into the kingdom of obedience to God's will.

Phew, for ten years as a Christian I messed around like some of you are doing. And if you're not obeying God and you're a believer, I tell you, you've got the worst of the bargain at both ends. Because, you see, if you're a Christian, you're fed up with the world.

And if you won't obey God, well, you don't get on with him. And you're having an unhappy time. You can't go back and enjoy the things you used to enjoy because you've got a new nature who protests.

You can't enjoy your salvation either because you won't obey him to the limit. Oh, what a miserable experience that is. To be indwelt by the Holy Ghost but be dominated by the flesh.

Brother, at 3.50 on this day of July 1960, that can stop right now. And you can enter into the joy of your salvation if you'll only submit and let that stupid, arrogant little puppet that you call self be put under your feet in the name of the Lord. Then let me say this to you.

The obedience of the Lord Jesus was not only his great joy, but it meant for him waiting upon God for his will. You know, this is one of the most marvelous things to me about my Savior. I'm going to ask him to explain it more fully to me when I meet him.

But the book says, Hebrews 5.8, listen to it. He learned obedience through the things that he suffered. Oh, marvelous grace.

He was always perfect. Always without flaw and sin. But when he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness.

To be tested by the devil. And after 40 days and 40 nights without food, he came back having overcome all the powers of darkness. And he came back, Luke is careful to tell us, in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

See it? He went out in fullness. He came back in power. And fullness becomes power through testing.

And through obedience to all God's will. And in your behalf and on my behalf, he stood his ground in foot-to-foot combat with the enemy who would have dragged me into hell if he hadn't. Do you mean to tell me I am going to raise my proud, puny little neck and say no to Jesus after that? Ah, but each act of obedience of the Master fitted him for a new discovery of the will of his Father.

And so it is for us. To obey God makes you fit for the further revelation of the will of God. To disobey God draws the veil right down and you'll never have any more light till you get back to the place where you disobeyed him.

You see, you never get there. Understand what I mean? Nobody can come to a speaker and say I'm the finished product. Did I ever tell you about a fellow who came to me in Southampton once? After a service at the Church of Christ? He came up to me and he said, Hallelujah, brother! And you know an Englishman, at least some Englishman like me react rather peculiarly to that.

And I backed about five yards and said, Hallelujah. And I hoped that all was right. And he said with a radiant face, brother, brother, I was saved two years ago, sanctified one year ago, and I'm completely free from sin.

I said, my dear old boy, you've got further in two years than I've got in 25. And if I read my Bible aright, you've got further in two years than Paul got in his lifetime. Paul began by saying I'm less, least of the saints.

And then less than the least of all the saints. And then at the end, look, Timothy, I want to tell you about myself. I've been on the road now for 30 years and more as a Christian, but I'm just the chief in sin.

Paradox, isn't it? But blessedly true. Greater revelation of God's grace is accompanied by a constant revelation of my own corruption. If you look for goodness inside you or me, you'll never find any.

Waste of time. But listen, every step of obedience opens up the way for a greater revelation of his perfect plan. But if I speak to a disobedient Christian in this world and who in some issue has raised your proud neck and said no to Jesus, I'm not surprised you don't know where you are or where you're going or what the next step may be.

Of course you won't. Of course you won't. There will be never any further light of the path until you repent and obey God.

And lastly, the obedience of the Lord Jesus. Oh, tell it, tell it out to the angels in heaven. Tell it out to the whole family of God's people in the world.

Tell it out to the whole human race. And remind the devil of it that the obedience of the Lord Jesus was unflinching to the point of death. He was obedient.

Aren't you there? And that's the obedience that Jesus Christ imparts to you. May I make this perfectly clear, unless there be any who are not saved? May I make it equally clear to any child of God who today is a bit uncertain of themselves? God saves you for one purpose, that is, to die. That's all.

You're not asked to live for Christ, you're asked to die. There's an instrument which was used in Old Testament times by the priest, about which we don't hear too much these days. It was called the flesh hook.

Do you know what the priest did with that? It was used in order to get the sacrifice under the flame and keep it there till it was reduced to dust and ashes. And listen, if this convention is going to break out in a burst of Holy Ghost revival, and surely there's been enough preaching on sin and conviction to bring us there, if it's to break out in a burst of blessing, do you know what God is going to do? He's going to put the flesh hook upon some of us and He's going to pull us back to the place of obedience and total submission to His will, to the place of death and put the sacrifice under the flame until you and I are reduced to dust and ashes and then upon that He'll build the beauty of the character of Jesus Himself. I conclude by just saying this, that the unreserved surrender of the Lord Jesus to the will of God was met by the unceasing bestowal of the power of the Holy Ghost.

And oh, just think what could happen out on the mission fields of the world, out through this beloved country, out everywhere you can imagine, wherever you touch an issue in the name of the Lord Jesus, if you go from Keswick Convention, if you go a man who's understood the principle of submission, by the obedience of one worked out, in us shall many be made righteous, and through such lives the Holy Ghost has His way. Such information as we have about Luke comes from the passages of the book of the Acts, in which he uses the first person plural called the we passages. They're the great passages really, but they're the we passages, W-E.

And from four references to him from the pen of St. Paul, his movements are hinted rather than stated, but they can be traced, and they gather round four place names, Troas, Philippi, Jerusalem, Rome. At Troas, Luke is the Christian doctor, caring for the needs of the apostle who had been ill. At Philippi, he is the devoted pastor, who knew where prayer was wont to be made, and seems to have known Lydia well.

At Jerusalem, he is the careful writer, gathering material for the third gospel. I wonder, did he interview Mary for the nativity details? Then on to Rome as the faithful friend. Perhaps he entered the ship as a slave with Aristarchus in Acts 27, for the details of that long voyage are described by one who seems to enjoy a sea voyage, and who knows the language of the ship.

At Rome, the apostle endured imprisonment twice, but each time his faithful doctor was with him. Then the unrecorded martyrdom, and a lonely Luke going out to draw the closing lines of his picture of the man he had seconded from the shores of Troas to the Appian Way. O God, please may we have men like this

today.

Luke, with his special ministry. Six, Demas with his sorry lapse. Verse 14, we know so little about this man, and yet he has fixed himself upon our minds, assisted by the writings of John Bunyan, in terms of 2 Timothy 4.11. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed.

Was it the love of money, or of material gain, that drew Demas from the side of the greatest Christian of all time? We do not know, but it was something belonging to this world. The saintly John Trapp has a telling comment on Galatians 6.14, in which Paul wrote, The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. John Trapp writes, The world and I are well agreed.

The world cares not a pin for me, and I care as little for the world. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Demas, with his sorry lapse, make much of these penned pictures, and ask God so to possess your life in days to come, that you will be unable to manifest a steady faith, to get your second wind, to fulfill some secret service, to engage in strenuous prayer, to exercise your special ministry, and to avoid a sorry lapse. Now, Paul, you really must close the letter. You must be getting very tired there in prison, and Tychicus is ready to depart for Colossae.

So salutations only, please, from now. And here they are, verses 15 to 18. Salutations are sent to Laodicea, and to a house church in that city.

Notice that Paul asks for an exchange of letters. Let the Laodiceans read his letter to Colossae, and the Colossians a letter that will reach them from Laodicea. What was this letter from Laodicea? We don't know, but most likely the epistle to the Ephesians, which is a kind of circular letter, and would be passed round all that area of Asia Minor which Paul's ministry had influenced when for three years he made Ephesus the center of his preaching.

And say to Archippus, verse 17, perhaps the son of Philemon and Apphia, Lightfoot suggests that his ministry was at Laodicea. Bishop Hanlimo thought he took the place of Epaphras at Colossae when Epaphras left to visit Paul in Rome. We don't know.

We'll leave the two bishops to give us both their suggestions. Whatever this ministry, or wherever it was exercised, we don't know, but what we do know is that Paul said, Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it. The sufficiency of Christ about which we have been thinking provides for and calls for the fulfillment of every ministry which we have received in the Lord.

Beloved, listen. There are few things so urgent today as this. Fulfill thy ministry.

Bishop Ryle, the first bishop of Liverpool, wrote, We have no right to expect God's cause to be kept up by constant miracles while his servants stand idle. Then fulfill thy ministry in the mission field, in the pulpit, in the Sunday school class, in whatever place it is made yours by God. Fulfill thy ministry.

So the closing words are added by Paul himself. Verse 18. As was his custom, he takes the quill from his amanuensis to write the last few words.

Listen quietly for a moment. You will almost hear the clanging of the chains as he writes. Then look, come and look here.

He's taken away his hand. The letters are large and shaky. It's impossible to read them and not recall his last injunction.

Remember my bonds. Not for the stirring of sympathy, but for the acceptance of authority. For there is no persuasion to equal that which stems from a life of utter bond service to Jesus Christ.

Grace be with you. There is no amen. And even if there were, it would but mark the fact that the sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ for creed and conduct will never end.

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