

Learning Obedience through Suffering

Hebrews 5:7-10

Spurgeon said, *“I bear my willing witness that I owe more to the fire, and the hammer, and the file, than to anything else in my Lord’s workshop. I sometimes question whether I have ever learned anything except through the rod. When my school-room is darkened, I see most.”*

Most of us want God to remove affliction, but it is through suffering that we learn obedience. Obedience is voluntary subjection to *the will of God*. If our obedience is not voluntary, it is servility, which is *outward compliance by overt compulsion*. We are sons of God, *willing slaves* (bondservants). When Jesus Christ came into the world, he came here as Jehovah’s obedient Son to do his Father’s will as a man. Through suffering, Christ learned obedience. You are the same.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a bondservant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

I. Obedience to God is the highest good for any child of God.

The story of Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of stew illustrates this principle. The birthright was “the right of birth” for the firstborn male in Israel. According to God, the firstborn male was given a double inheritance, authority in the home, and other special rights. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for “a bowl of stew.” What happened? (Read Matthew 1:2). Jesus’ genealogy: *“Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob [not Esau].”* God will reframe us in order to refrain us. He will afflict in order to assist. *Suffering teaches. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word”* (Ps. 119:67).

II. Our love relationship with God does not necessarily exempt us from suffering.

“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and he scourges every son” (Heb. 12:6).
“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (II Cor. 4:17). Think long before you ask God to remove suffering.

III. In the midst of suffering in this world we learn obedience to God.

“It is good that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Ps. 119:71).
“I know, Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you have afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75).
*“We often learn more of God under **the rod** that strikes us, than under the staff that comforts us”* (Charnock). *“God’s house of correction is His school of instruction”* (Brooks).

The obedience we might need is a resistance to the passions and temptations of this life.

Or, as we have seen throughout the first five chapters of Hebrews, there is what is called “the obedience of faith.” Maybe the Lord is teaching us to trust Him in everything.

Regardless, embrace your suffering. Don’t waste your sorrows. The heartaches in life are mercy drops from heaven. They are God’s way of teaching you His way. Embrace them.

“In everything give thanks: for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (I Thess. 5:18).