

Obedience. It's not a word we hear much about in the context of a relationship with God. Why is that? It seems the word more aptly fits into a conversation about raising kids, or training your dog. But, where does the topic of obedience fit in to a relationship with God? Doesn't that negate the whole concept of grace? Aren't we just disobedient little children who need a loving God that overlooks our every fault, and runs to clean up all the messes we have made in our lives?

God does depict himself as the overlooking Father in the story of the prodigal son. Even though the son has squandered his inheritance on wild living, the Father doesn't seem to care about that. He runs to his son, and indeed has a party for him, to celebrate the fact that he is alive! And he's come home!

It's amazing how much the pendulum has swung in the other direction since the days of the Puritans when people lived in fear of the living God. Our cultural norms have gone in the opposite direction. People have forgotten how to blush. Homosexuality, pre-marital sex, violence, drunk driving, and the use of recreational drugs all have become so commonplace in our society that we are numb to it. Having children out of wedlock is not just accepted, but it is fast on its way to becoming the norm.

Yet, God's word speaks over and over about the necessity of obeying God, and becoming holy. It is God's plan for us:

*"Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and **have become slaves of God**, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."* Rom 6: 19b-22

And:

"let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Cor 7:1

And why does it matter? It matters not only to God, himself, but it matters in the lives of those around you. Both believers and unbelievers:

*"men will praise God for the **obedience** that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the **surpassing grace God has given you.**"*

Grace is always meant to lead us to obedience, and living out the gospel. One of our favorite verses talks of grace,

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works so that no one can boast."

Yet, we often forget to quote the verse right after that which suggests the 'why?' behind it:

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***"

When we make the decision to follow Christ, who knows what assignment we are signing up for? God has a purpose for each of our lives, and He also has a great work for each of us to achieve in our lifetime. As we pray and seek God's will in our life, God reveals to us what that is. I'm not talking about vocation, although that is part of it. I'm talking about a daily walk with God where, if we let Him, God opens our eyes to the possibility of service in the lives of those around us. We truly are God's hands, eyes, and feet here on earth.

"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 1: 6