



God the Son

He learned obedience

Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what He suffered. Hebrews 5:8

Setting the scene

When God the Son came into this world and became man it was no pretence. To be truly man, He had to accept the actual status and conditions of humanity. Paul says that clearly He was, *“born under the law” (Galatians 4:4)*, so He knew what it was to obey the Father as man should. He was subject to the Law so that, through Him, the Law might be fulfilled and, by His death on the cross, the Law was abolished. The Law died when the Son of God laid down His life on the cross as a ransom for many.

‘He learned obedience’, not as a rebel under correction, but as a child, a youth, and a man in obedience to God's Law.

He was obedient to His parents

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Luke 2:51

Luke tells of the miraculous birth and then refers to Joseph and Mary as ‘parents’ (Luke 2:41), for that was the relationship which, in effect, they bore to Jesus. Luke then goes on to say that, in the home in Nazareth, Jesus was obedient to them. We have little to draw upon by way of information save that He *“grew and became strong; and was filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40)*. Mary could use a chiding tone to Him in Luke 2:48-50, yet did not understand the reply He gave her, *“Why were you searching for me?” He asked. “Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?” Luke 2:49*. This shows that He came down from heaven but His parents did not fully understand. How slow we are to understand anything that comes from God.

His wisdom surpassed theirs, nevertheless He learned a boy's obedience for we read in Luke 2:51, *“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart”*.

Jesus was submissive to His parents and this would involve learning to work with His hands in His reputed father's business, for no Jewish child was ever brought up in idleness. The Jews, when they wanted to show that there was nothing special about Him, said, *“Isn't this the carpenter?” Mark 6:3*.

He was obedient to the Father in His public ministry

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (the one I claim to be) and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” John 8:28-29

To be lifted up was a common expression for ‘to die’, or ‘to be killed’ among the Jewish writers. Jesus was actually saying that when He has been crucified they will know that He is the Christ because of the signs that will follow. By *“The Father has not left me alone,”* Christ was saying that, even though they have the power to put Him to death, this would not mean that His Father had abandoned Him for He always did what pleased Him.

It is one thing to know about obedience and to approve the idea from a distance. It is another to act correctly in the thick of life’s demands. The life of Jesus Christ, both by His words and by His deeds, revealed the Father. That can only be explained as coming from the unbroken communion with the Father. The reality of it was convincing to many for John 8:30 says, *“Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him”*.

He was obedient at great cost to Himself

*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”
Luke 22:42.*

All His days were spent in the spirit of self-sacrifice. Gethsemane is the summary of them all. It indicates a struggle that has always been in progress, not only of self-will against God’s will, but of human limitations faced with tremendous odds. Yet, when He recoils from death, it is not with a fear like ours. We shrink back, ignorant of what awaits us. Jesus fully saw the reality of what was going to happen to Him and obeyed. He was, says Paul, obedient even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). It was a death of utter loneliness and degradation.

Discussion

What are we to understand by the “sinlessness” of Jesus? Is it only that He drew back from all unworthy and evil ways, and achieved full conformity with every “You shall not”? Is it not rather that He lived positively and adventurously in fulfilling the loving will of the Father? Which of these was the greatest element in His life? Is there a pattern here for His followers?