

“The Blessings of Obedience”
2 Kings 18:7-8
(Preached at Trinity, September 4, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 1-6** we are given a description of the reign of Hezekiah. Usually, such commendation was reserved for the epitaph. But here it is implied that the righteous character of Hezekiah directed his entire reign. From the beginning he set his heart on removing from the kingdom all that was not honoring to God. The author describes him as the most David-like king since David.
2 Kings 18:3 NAU - "He did right in the sight of the LORD"
2 Kings 18:5 NAU - "He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel"
2 Kings 18:6 NAU - "he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments"
2. God's covenants have eternal consequences. They all flow from the eternal Covenant of Redemption which is a covenant of grace. The Father elected a people from the mass of fallen humanity and determined to deliver them from sin. He sent forth His Son to redeem them and His Spirit to apply the Gospel to them.
3. There were also temporal elements of God's covenants that were designed to progressively point us to the spiritual fulfillment in Christ. Outward temporal blessings were often given for faithful obedience, just as there were temporal consequences for wickedness.
Deuteronomy 28:1-2 NAU - "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:"
Deuteronomy 28:15 NAU - "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:"
4. We need to understand these were temporal in nature and were designed to point to God's demands upon His covenant people. It in no way implies that God showed eternal favor upon those who did good works.
Man has always been justified only by trusting in God's covenant promises through the Savior. Hezekiah's greatest virtue is that he trusted God.
5. What we are witnessing in the life of Hezekiah is God's covenant favor upon the faithfulness of Hezekiah.
2 Kings 18:7 NAU - "And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered."
 - A. Only of David and Hezekiah is it said that "the LORD was with him."

- B. But we can see God's blessings upon faithful obedience.
Joshua 1:7-8 NAU - "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
6. We must never see this in a mechanical way, that certain behavior upon the earth automatically translates into temporal blessings and curses from God. There will be an eternal judgment when perfect justice will be delivered to all. Upon the earth in the temporal realm God's actions are always under His sovereign determination and mixed with forbearance and mercy.
- A. After every disaster questions abound regarding the reason why it occurred. This was true with 9/11, tornados, hurricanes like Katrina, Gustav, Laura, and Ida. Earthquakes, wildfires, floods and on and on. People ask, was this God's judgment upon sin? Was Hurricane Katrina God's judgment upon the wickedness of New Orleans? Or are American elections the sign of God's judgment?
- B. We must never forget, God's wrath is always kindled upon this fallen world. With every disaster we should be reminded that we are worthy of much more. Every disaster is mixed with mercy. We should remember the words of our Lord,
Luke 13:1-3 NAU - "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*? ³ "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."
- C. And we need to remember that every blessing is an undeserved grace and always administered by God's sovereign purposes. This means sometimes the righteous suffer and sometimes the wicked enjoy many temporal blessings. And how can we expect God to repay our obedience when we are servants commanded to obey.
Luke 17:10 NAU - "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'
 Anselm said, "If a man should serve God a thousand years, he could never by that service deserve half a day, in fact not one moment of time, in that eternal glory."¹
7. Christianity has often been plagued by extremes, and too often by bad theology. Over the course of the last 100 years a prosperity Gospel has been promoted. It denies sovereign grace and directs attention to human effort. It puts a high priority upon our earthly condition. There is great danger in this mindset.
Romans 8:6 KJV - "For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace."

¹ Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001, Quote on Page 160.

8. This is not what we are seeing in this passage. God's blessings upon Hezekiah were not an automatic repayment for his faithfulness. Nor was he motivated by a desire to increase his wealth. Rather, he was motivated by the honor of God. Still, he was greatly blessed with temporal blessings. So much so, he had to build special storehouses to store all the bounty.
- 2 Chronicles 32:27-29 NAU** - "Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles, ²⁸ storehouses also for the produce of grain, wine and oil, pens for all kinds of cattle and sheepfolds for the flocks. ²⁹ He made cities for himself and acquired flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great wealth."
9. So, the burning question for us is, does God reward the faithfulness of His people with outward blessings?
- In order to answer this we need to understand the nature of rewards. They may be either temporal, spiritual, or eternal.
- A. Eternal blessings are immortality and eternal life in the presence of God.
- B. Temporal blessings include health, comfort, food, shelter, etc. – Hezekiah was receiving blessings of this sort.
- There is no axiomatic correlation between our earthly condition and our outward behavior. Many of the wealthiest people in our nation have been unrighteous.
- C. Spiritual blessings include increase of grace, victory over sin, joy and peace, communion with God. They are of infinite value, yet few treasure them.
10. What are some of the blessings of obedience? You have to define the blessings you are seeking. One has to measure his priorities—what are your greatest blessings? All of us struggle with this, including Hezekiah. Later, God would rebuke him for the prideful display of his earthly wealth.
- A. We are not oblivious to our temporal blessings. We are interested in homes and our health. Jesus said these things must not be our chief priority. We pray for our daily bread and we pray for the strength of our mortal bodies, but we cannot purchase these things by our good actions. And these things are not the chief desire of the Christian. We have higher goals.
- Moses was looking for a greater reward:
- Hebrews 11:24-26 NAU** - "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."
- B. Obviously, our eternal blessings are of great value. We keep our eye on eternity. These cannot be earned, only received by grace.
- But there seems to be a degree of eternal reward. Paul wrote of a "crown of righteousness." That is, a crown that the righteous receive. Our good works are not irrelevant.
- Colossians 3:23-24 NAU** - "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

Even with our eternal reward, we have to measure what we consider the greatest measure of reward. The joys of heaven are far beyond what our carnal minds can conceive. If our reward is our enjoyment of God, we will cease having low, carnal ideas about heaven and ponder what it will mean to enjoy Him more?

- C. This brings us to consider our earthly, spiritual rewards? Are these not of great importance to us? Are these increased by our obedience? The answer is yes. What are some of these blessings we receive

I. One of the great blessings of obedience is the blessing of God's Presence

2 Kings 18:7 NAU - "And the LORD was with him"

- A. Hezekiah's steadfast cleaving to God resulted in the wonderful sense of God's presence.

1. In the wilderness Israel would lose the presence of God due to their disobedience.

Exodus 33:3 NAU - "I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way."

2. When King Saul sinned and forsook God, God withdrew His presence.

1 Samuel 28:6 NAU - "When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."

3. Sin can cause the Holy Spirit to remove His gracious influences

Isaiah 59:2 NAU - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."

Ephesians 4:30 NAU - "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

- B. Sin will not affect our union with Christ but it will affect our fellowship with Him

1. There is a difference between *union* and *communion*

- a. Our union with God is sovereign and unalterable. In the Gospel, we have been united to Christ by faith. We are a part of the body of Christ.

- b. But our communion with God is alterable – it can be affected by our actions.

1 John 1:6 NAU - "f we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;"

2. Sin is detrimental to our relationship with Christ. It hinders our prayer life. It crushes our confidence. It acts like water on the fires of our fervency. It separates us from fellowship with God.

Ps.66:18 – "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*:"

3. As Christians, our greatest desire is the presence of God in our lives. There is no greater earthly blessing—the sense of His abiding presence with us.

4. Samuel Bolton in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*
 “A child of God esteems it the height of punishment to be denied communion with God. He has reached the height of happiness when such communion is his.”²
 “The believer does not perform duty that it may go well with him here; nor does he perform duty that he may gain glory hereafter. He regards communion and nearness to God as happiness enough. He esteems it a peace of his heaven, to have communion with God.”³
 “The godly man goes about duty for the sake of obtaining communion with God, and knows it to be his reward and happiness to have that communion, while the lack of it is the greatest punishment he can endure.”⁴

II. Obedience brings us peace. It is one of the spiritual fruits.

- A. We have been brought to a permanent peace with God
Romans 5:1 NAU - "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"
1. This is the peace of propitiation, of reconciliation.
 2. We cannot lose this peace. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace.
- B. We can lose peace of conscience, however
1. As Christians our consciences have been awakened to sin
Sin offends our consciences.
 2. It isn't a fear of condemnation. It is a grief of heart over offending God.
 3. The Holy Spirit convicts our conscience. It is a hounding sorrow and grief of heart. It is this conviction that keeps us from sin
 4. Our offended conscience crushes our confidence before God and hinders our assurance.
 LBC Chapter 18:4 – “True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit.”
- C. Obedience keeps our conscience at peace
1. When we sin our consciences are troubled – the Holy Spirit brings conviction. It is a terrible burning fire in our bosom.
 2. It is at this level that God's chastening often comes.
 - a. Sometimes we flee from the warnings of our conscience. We kick against the pricks.
 - b. God intervenes to turn us.
 His chastening is not punitive but disciplinary – it is an act of love to return us to holiness
 3. The result is to restore us to fellowship with God and peace of conscience
 Hebrews refers to it as the peaceful fruit of righteousness
Hebrews 12:11 NAU - "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

² Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001, Page 140.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

- III. One of the greatest benefits of obedience is the joy of pleasing God
- A. Obedience is an expression of our gratitude to God.
1. If God has saved us that we might be holy is there any greater pursuit in this life? We are motivated by evangelical principles – of faith, love, and delight.”⁵
 2. Jesus, our high example, lived in total obedience to the Father
Philippians 2:8 NAU - "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
 - a. Obedience was His high desire – it ruled His holy life
John 4:34 NAU - "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
 - b. Even as He considered the torment of the cross, He was directed totally by a desire to do the Father’s will
Luke 22:42 NAU - "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
 - c. What motivated His great desire to do His Father’s will? It was pure love.
John 14:31 NAU - "but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me."
 - d. Even the suffering of the cross brought Him joy because it pleased the Father.
Hebrews 12:2 NAU - "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
 The word for joy (χαρά) can also be translated delight or happiness
- B. For the Christian our obedience should be motivated by the pure joy of pleasing God.
1. We obey and serve God because we love Him
1 John 5:3 – “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”
 2. Nothing should bring us greater pleasure than obeying Him. We have no other motive. We expect nothing in return. Obedience is simply the desire of our heart and it brings us great joy.

Conclusion:

1. These are the greatest blessings of obedience – the presence of God, communion with Him, the joy of pleasing Him.
2. And as we obey Him the Holy Spirit works in us ever-increasing measures of His grace-strength in our warfare, victory over sin, delight in prayer . . .

⁵ Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001, Page 73.