

Paul's Apostleship

"Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, severed for the evangel of God ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, through Whom we obtained grace and apostleship for faith-obedience among all nations, for His name's sake" (Romans 1:1-5)

HOW UNIQUE IS THIS COMMISSION! It was received through JESUS CHRIST, our LORD. That One was God's Son, and concerning Him GOD speaks in HIS EVANGEL. GOD roused His Son from among the dead. In That glory, God displayed His righteousness. In raising Him from among the dead, God tendered faith to all (Acts 17:31). By the fact of His resurrection, all have at their side the essential foundation which should promote faith. This new announcement, though becoming the basic fact of the evangel, it was not at that moment being elaborated into an expression which covered the whole details of the EVANGEL OF GOD.

THE WORTH OF FAITH

There was the addition of the needed GRACE, bestowed so that the apostleship may be obtained. It was GRACE which overwhelmed, and with it, to Paul, came faith and love. Such details intimate how unparalleled this apostleship and they characterise the Evangel of God. The words, "obedience of faith," occurring in the opening statements of the Roman epistle (Rom. 1:5), define not only the course to which the ministry called, but also the distinctive worth of the {FAITH} related to that evangel. These same words also accord with the injunction of the eonian God, and occur again in the verses concluding the epistle (Rom. 16:26).

This faith subjects to the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. That is a mighty matter to comprehend. As with the apostle's commission, there is overwhelming GRACE in the evangel, for as we have intimated, it speaks beyond the teaching given out at Athens. The enabling values, resident in the evangel, are expressed by the words "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH." These two matters are coalesced to signify faith characterised by OBEDIENCE, or obedience springing from faith. Here the genitive word "of" is expanded to assist the understanding. We may well write, FAITH-OBEDIENCE, as though it was one word, or we may consider the words as akin to an apposition, the one word expressing the other word.

THE EVANGEL DISPENSES FAITH-OBEDIENCE

Thus the words, "obedience of faith," describe the spiritual values which the evangel contains and bestows. The words say that faith is absolute, for it has no lack, since it supplies its own obedience. The two matters are thus ONE. They speak of faith as subject to the righteousness which is of God. Faith creates the will to OBEY, so that we have the voluntary submission to God's way of righteousness, revealed in the evangel related to this apostleship of Paul. This is the will operated in us by GOD, and it accords with His delight.

THE FAITH-OBEDIENT SON OF GOD

God's evangel is concerning HIS SON. It tells of the faith-obedience of Him Who is our SAVIOUR. His faith was in GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, and consequently, His obedience was in God's righteousness. In raising Him from among the dead, His God and Father exercised His Own righteousness, and acknowledged His Son's faith and His obedience. In this God vindicated Himself and acquitted His Son, and, consequently, all who are of His faith are likewise justified. This is the evangel of GOD CONCERNING HIS SON.

THE UNIT OF THE EVANGEL

That there is no separation, allowed by the terms of the Evangel of God, between obedience and faith, this is the matter discussed in Romans 6. The idea that they are separate matters is really due to a misapprehension, a lack of understanding as to the contents of God's evangel. To compass the faults of such ignorance, the

discussion of that chapter follows an analysis which exhibits the spiritual implications of the several basic items which constitute the evangel we believe. If we believe that we died together with Christ, so we believe we died to sin. Then, also, the sequence which came to Christ, that of His rousing and living to God, this is ours, for we live to God in faith- obedience.

FAITH OBEDIENCE IS THE NEW LIFE

The analysis shows that, for us, obedience is the integral of our faith, of what we believe. Obedience is not a matter to be supplied by us. We follow the obedience springing from faith, knowing this, that our old humanity, that which is regarded as comprised under the term "disobedience," is crucified together with HIM. The values which emerge from our crucifixion with Christ, these correspondingly are the POWERS of the new life, that which has come to exist in the believer's spirit. The new life implies and supplies obedience into God's approach present - FAITH - the oblation which GOD GRACES TO US in His approach (Eph. 2:8).

OBVERSE AND REVERSE

From a consideration of the elements of the Greek term which we seek to cover by our English word - OBEDIENCE - it will, perhaps, be of some assistance to perceive how close is the connection between "faith" and "obedience". Properly regarded, faith requires GOD to have spoken words which we hear. THIS HE DOES IN THE EVANGEL. Obedience is a rendering of the Greek elements - UNDER-HEARING. We believe what we hear from GOD'S WORDS. This faith, in its regard for GOD'S WORDS, puts us under that which is heard. In the words - "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH" - obedience is but the reverse and faith the obverse. In this way the evangel of GOD subjects us to God's righteousness.

WALK IS THE LOGIC OF FAITH-OBEDIENCE

If we are perceiving the very intimate relationship which exists in the evangel between the words "obedience" and "faith", then we will the more easily discern that our walk really flows from our faith-obedience to the righteousness of God. The translating of these two matters of the evangel into our walk - THIS IS OUR DIVINE SERVICE. It is the logic of the evangel, that is, the words of the evangel, which comprise our faith, these, in our walk, we make to be a visible matter. Strictly, our walk is not the evangel. But the faith-obedience which we have obtained through the evangel, this has become our walk. The renewed mind, occasioned in faith-obedience, this flows out in our walk.

FAITH OBEDIENCE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS

FAITH-OBEDIENCE is then one matter, absolute in itself. It describes the spiritual impartation to the believer's spirit which comes by means of the evangel heralded by GOD concerning HIS SON. In speaking thus, that is, using the words "obedience of faith", the evangel is not regarding a faith which requires to be perfected. IT IS A FAITH WHICH IS PERFECT, for it is obedience to God's righteousness which HE bestows through faith.

Faith of this category displaces any righteousness of which we may consider ourselves to be possessed. It is that faith which has to do with the righteousness coming to us through Jesus Christ's faith. It is from this righteousness that our obedience arises. Hence it is the obedience springing from, or flowing from, FAITH.

WEAKNESS ELIMINATED

THE EVANGEL OF GOD avoids all the weakness of former eras. Law was given and it required obedience to its precepts. If there be not obedience to its precepts, then law is nullified due to the weakness of disobedience. The Evangel avoids that weakness, in that it is heralded for faith, and obedience is the resident accompaniment of that faith. Within the faith are all the values and glories of Christ Jesus, all that He and HIS GOD AND FATHER have achieved for the believer. It is thus a living faith, for obedience exists in the faith. The one is not unless the other be. The words - FAITH-OBEDIENCE - intimate that faith possesses righteousness, for obedience is surely the using of the righteousness which is of GOD.

A TESTED FEATURE

The words, quoted from Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4), do not deal with justification by faith. They rather deal with the value of faith to the just man in a time of crisis and divine visitation. The quotation (Rom. 1:17) is to show that

faith is not a new matter, nor is it without proven quality. It is older than law, and it is equal to all the problems of life, for it takes account of the statements of God.

The words are not dealing with the problems of the evangel to which Paul was commissioned. True the words are saying that faith is not of casual value. Rather are these words saying that faith is a matter real and vital in purpose. The past has shown this, so that Paul's evangel, related as it is to faith, is using a principle which has stood the test of the past, for under divine visitation to which the quotation from Habakkuk referred, it was possible for the just man to live by his faith, despite the destruction of the means of divine service around him. The Chaldeans may remove the facility of righteousness and worship, yet the just man still had his faith.

A RICHER APPLICATION

In the EVANGEL OF GOD, faith has a richer application than in the words which show how the prophet applied it. In a sense, faith is modulated by the words believed. The prophet's application of faith was to the circumstances in Israël, and God's revelation to them. Faith found its value there. Yet we are seeing the most precious view of faith when we perceive that faith is strengthened by the integration with obedience which is subject to the bestowed righteousness of GOD. Then one has come to know that his faith is not related to any obedience prescribed for him to supply, whether through law, or from ritual, or from the righteousness of his own conduct. Salvation is thus utterly related to our GOD, and to the grace and glory in HIS SON, of which we have heard from His God and Father. The true pattern of such faith is the FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE STATURE OF THE SON OF GOD

SUBJECTION to the righteousness of God is the theme of the ROMAN EPISTLE. Righteousness is obtained by those of the NATIONS since they seek it by faith. In this position, established by GOD, they are ready to go forward to the status of the ecclesia which is HIS BODY. They have assimilated somewhat of the supply provided, and are equipped to learn of the glory of the stature needed by those who are for the complement of CHRIST.

The measure of this stature is that of the realisation of the son of God, and it is not one which is beyond attaining. Indeed, such is the available supply, that each one is the more likely to realise the measure which must be for his own part, amidst the articulation by God.

This realisation will contribute toward the growth of the body, and so the body will the more readily upbuild itself in love. What a necessary correspondence this upbuilding is, may be discerned when it is realised that the original designation of the members by God was IN LOVE. This assures that the ecclesia will yet be without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 4:12-16 and 5:27).

What stanchness and power we need in order to grasp such facts around GOD'S LOVE! There is need too, for prayer in this regard. It is a small limit to see this love only in regard to one's own salvation. There is immenseness to the achievements of the love in which we are designated. The accomplishment has breath and length and depth and height, and yet Christ's love transcends beyond even these dimensions.

IN FAITH-OBEDIENCE we have the stature of the son of GOD. CHRIST HIMSELF IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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