



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing



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Worship Music

Prayer

Lord, I thank You for filling me with supernatural endurance to do the job You've given me to do. In the midst of all the problems, hassles, and challenges that have come against me, I am very aware that I wouldn't be able to do it without the divine gift of endurance You have placed in my life. Others may think I am strong, but I know that much of my strength and fortitude is due to what You have done inside me. So today I give You praise, and I thank You for continuing to strengthen me until I bring this assignment to a victorious end. Lead me in Your path, God's will for me and plans, and flood me with Your grace to do it, for if You call me to do it, through Your grace the know how is there by Your leading, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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(really makes you stop and think)

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1 AFTER THE death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' minister, 2 Moses My servant is dead. So now arise [take his place], go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, the Israelites. 3 Every place upon which the sole of your foot shall tread, that have I given to you, as I promised Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon to the great river Euphrates—all the land of the Hittites [Canaan]—and to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea on the west shall be your territory. 5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong (confident) and of good courage, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only you be strong and very courageous, that you may do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success. 9 Have not I commanded you? Be strong, vigorous, and very courageous. Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. 10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 Pass through the camp and command the people, Prepare your provisions, for within three days you shall pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess. 12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 Remember what Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God is giving you [of these two and a half tribes a place of] rest and will give you this land [east of the Jordan]. 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall dwell in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan, but all your mighty men of valor shall pass on before your brethren [of the other tribes] armed, and help them [possess their land] 15 Until the Lord gives your brethren rest, as He has given you, and they also possess the land the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and possess it, the land Moses the Lord's servant gave you on the sunrise side of the Jordan. 16 They answered Joshua, All you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 As we hearkened to Moses in all things, so will we hearken to you; only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and will not hearken to all you command him shall be put to death. Only be strong, vigorous, and of good courage.

The Man Joshua

Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8). He had been a personal assistant of Moses throughout the 40 years of wilderness wandering. He went with Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:13). He was one of the 12 spies, and one of the two who wanted to go ahead and conquer the land in God's strength (Numbers 13:8 , 16). Josephus says that Joshua was 85 when he succeeded Moses. It is thought that it took about six years to subdue the Canaanites, and Joshua spent the rest of his life settling and governing the 12 tribes. Joshua was in charge of Israel for about 25 years. He died at age 110 and was buried in Timnath Serah, in Ephraim.

Joshua was a great warrior who disciplined his forces and sent out spies—but he also prayed and trusted in God. He led his people into the Promised Land, and he may have been a prototype of his greater Successor, Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua), who is leading His own into the Promised Land of heaven.

Joshua 1. The Book; This is a grand chapter. Israel had a Book. It was only a fraction of what we now have in God's Word, but oh how important! God's solemn warning to Joshua, standing at the threshold of a gigantic task, was to be very careful to keep close to the words of that Book. Joshua listened and obeyed, and God honored him with phenomenal success. What a lesson for church leaders!

The Conquest and Settlement of Canaan

The conquest of the land of Canaan, under the leadership of Joshua, began around 1406 b.c. and probably lasted for some 10 to 15 years. These events are described in Joshua 1–12 . Soon after the conquest, or even while it was still under way, territory was allotted to each of the Israelite tribes. This was the beginning of Israel's settlement of the land of Canaan, the land that the Lord had promised to Abraham (and his descendants) some 500 years earlier (Genesis 12:1–3 , etc.). The Lord was bringing them into the "mountain of your inheritance—the place ... made for your dwelling, the sanctuary ... your hands established" (Exodus 15:17). Here the Israelites would have a chance to live their lives in obedience to, and worship of, the true and living God. It was here that the Levites, who were to teach God's Law to the people, were allotted 48 cities scattered throughout the land (Joshua 20 ; 1 Chronicles 6:39–66) so that their godly influence could permeate the people of God.

But the writers of the books of Joshua and Judges were well aware that not all of the Promised Land was under Israelite control (Joshua 13:1–6 ; Judges 3:1–3). As the tribes attempted to settle in their allotted territories, they encountered the opposition of peoples such as the Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines. But what was more serious was that in some instances Israel began to adopt the pagan religious practices of these peoples!

At times, the worship of Baal and Asherah became common among God's people as they failed to respond with gratitude to God's gracious dealings with them. In response to Israel's sinful disobedience, God used the pagan nations to oppress His people—as instruments of His judgment. Israel would eventually respond in repentance, and then God sent them a deliverer, a "Judge" (there are 12 of them mentioned in Scripture), to deliver them. After each deliverance, Israel typically enjoyed a period of "rest"—freedom from oppression—but unfortunately, Israel (or portions of it) would relapse into sin and the cycle would begin again.

During the period of the Judges (ca. 1390–1050 b.c.), there was no king in Israel. Ideally, Israel was to be a "theocracy," that is, a nation whose ruler was the Lord (Joshua 8:23). It appears that for much of the period of the Judges the tribes gathered for worship at Shiloh, some 20 miles north of Jerusalem, for there the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were located.

In the period just before the Israelites' conquest of Canaan, strong Egyptian kings such as Thutmose III and Amenhotep II had been active in Canaan. But the 400 cuneiform tablets found at El Amarna indicate that the time of the conquest and immediately thereafter (ca. 1400–1350 b.c.) was a period of more limited Egyptian influence in Canaan. Indeed, during the period of the Judges, groups of people from the Aegean area, known as the "Sea Peoples," percolated into the regions along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, including the land of Canaan. Among them were the Philistines, who settled in southwest Canaan in the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. The military conflicts between the Philistines and Israel (under Samson and Samuel) would eventually push the Israelites toward kingship.

During the middle of the period of the Judges, Egyptian rulers such as Seti I, Rameses II, and others passed through Canaan on their way north, to do battle with the kingdoms of Mitanni and the Hittites. But since the Israelites did not interfere with these troop movements, and since the movements were generally in territory controlled by Canaanites and others—that is, not by the Israelites—no record of any battles between Egypt and Israel is found in the book of Judges. However, the Egyptian ruler Merneptah does say in one of his texts that "Israel is laid waste [and] his seed is not" (Ancient Near Eastern Texts, p. 378) as a result of a campaign in his fifth year (ca. 1231 b.c.).

Archaeologically, the era of the Judges (1390–1050 b.c.) is known as the Late Bronze II (1400–1200 b.c.) and Iron I (1200–1000 b.c.) ages. Generally, this seems to have been a time when the strong Canaanite city-states were declining in size and influence, while newcomers—such as the Israelites—were gaining a foothold in the hill country, establishing small farmsteads and settlements there. Throughout, and especially at the end of, this period, Israel's near neighbors (especially the Ammonites to the east and the Philistines to the southwest) continued to grow stronger, so that the physical existence of God's people hung in the balance. It would take personalities such as Saul, but especially David, to complete the conquest of the land that had begun under Joshua 400 years earlier. (Halley's Bible Handbook; Henry Halley; 2000; Zondervan; Bible History and Commentaries; pages 187-190)

At this time you may be seated and we'll turn to the book of Joshua.

Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying (Jos 1:1),

Moses' minister; it doesn't mean that Joshua was Moses' pastor. The word "minister" there actually is in its true meaning, which is "servant". It is interesting how that somehow we've really sort of twisted the concept of a minister. So many men in the ministry today really don't look at the ministry as servanthood, but they're almost wanting people to serve them. "You know you ought to bring it to me because after all, I'm your minister." That's totally opposite of what the word minister really means. It means a servant.

Jesus said, "If any man would be chief among you, let him be the servant of all" (Mark 10:44). So a true minister is a man who is there not to be ministered to, but who is there to serve the needs of the people. So when it reads that he was Moses' servant, or his minister, it means that he was Moses' personal servant. He accompanied Moses, he helped Moses do the things, and Moses was, he was just his valet sort of, just his servant.

Now after the death of Moses, God elevated him from Moses servant, to the servant of all of the people of Israel. Faithful in the little things, now the Lord has entrusted into his hands even greater things. This is always the process of God. Jesus said, "Because thou hast always been faithful in little things, now I will make thee ruler over many" (Matthew 25:21). He said, "If I've entrusted to you the little things, and you haven't been able to take care of them, how can I entrust you the things of the kingdom?" As the Lord encourages us to the faithfulness to our service, no matter what avenue of service He may call us to.

Many times we look with disdain on particular ministries within the body. We look with sort of envy or desirability on other ministries within the body. Men are prone many times to put greater honor on certain ministries. Actually, the particular ministry that I have within the body is one that people often look up to in an enviable kind of a way because it is a particular ministry that draws a lot of prominence because I stand before people. But it doesn't really follow that my ministry is more important than your ministry within the body. There are some ministries that never cause any attention or notice to be drawn to them, which God has placed as some of the most vital and important ministries within the body.

There is that ministry of intercessory prayer. Rarely do you know who it is who has that ministry. Yet what an important ministry within the body. What great honor God places upon that ministry. What great rewards will that person have who has and is faithful to that ministry. I don't know that they'll have rows in heaven, I hope not. Because I'm afraid that I'll have a back row because there is so much feedback to the ministry that I have. It's so neat to have people like you who display and show so much love, and so much warmth, and so much kindness. I fear lest I often am getting all my rewards here, and they'll be nothing left for me when I get up there. I'll have to stand in the back on my tiptoes trying to see down to the front. Some of you people who have never been on the platform, never been in the public eye, you'll be right down there on the front row, because you have been faithful to God in that ministry that He has called you to fulfill. Though it wasn't one that caused a lot of attention to be drawn to you, but you were faithful in that to which God called you.

We need to get away from this concept of full-time ministry, looking at that, those who are on the Calvary Chapel staff are those who've been hired by some mission board are full-time ministers. You are, all of you called by God to be a full-time minister. Now Sears and Roebuck may pay your salary, or some other corporation, but you have been called of God to full time, serving the Lord. Whatever you're doing in word or deed, you should be doing for the glory of God, and as unto the Lord. Knowing that from the Lord you are going to receive your reward. So we need to have the proper concept of the ministry, and especially those who do serve on any church staff. We need to get away from that idea that the minister is someone who is especially holy, or is someone above the others, because as a minister, I'm actually a servant. Can you imagine seeking to serve this many people? But yet that's what God has called me to do. So Joshua was Moses' minister, that is he was his personal valet or servant.

Now after the death of Moses, the Lord then spoke unto Joshua. His name is a very significant name. It was given to him by Moses, originally his mother called him "Hosea", which means "salvation". But Moses after he saw the quality and all in this man, called him "Joshua", or "Yashua", which is "Jehovah is", or "Jehovah's salvation", or "Jehovah is salvation." It is the same name as Jesus. This is in Hebrew "Yashua", in Greek it is "Jesus". So we find in Joshua a very interesting type of Jesus Christ, who, Joshua, led the people into the inheriting of the land.

Now Moses could only lead the people so far. Moses led them out of Egypt and to the border of the Promised Land, but Moses could not lead them in. Moses stands for the law. The law cannot lead you into the fullness of God's blessings for your life. The law can lead you up to the border, but the law can't take you in. So, Moses the representative of the law, could lead them up to the border of the Promised Land; he could not lead them into the Promised Land. It is necessary now that Moses lay down his leadership. Joshua takes up the leadership to lead them into the promises of God.

Now there have been given unto us exceeding rich and precious promises. God has a life for you that is a super rich abundant life in Jesus Christ. It isn't God's will that you be on a spiritual roller coaster, that you be a yo-yo in your spiritual experience. It is God's desire that you enter into the full, rich life that He has for you in Jesus Christ, that you enjoy that life of victory in Christ. But the law can't lead you into that. Only Jesus Christ can lead you in. So where Moses had to leave off, Joshua took up, for the law led them as far as it could. Now the new relationship is gonna be one of faith. They're gonna have to begin by stepping out in faith, coming into this land that God had promised.

Now their conquest of Canaan is typical of the Christians entering into the life of victory that God has for us, as we are conquering over the giants of the flesh that have been entrenched so long in our lives, as we enter into that glorious victory in and through Jesus Christ, that the Lord has for us. Now, it is interesting that Joshua could only lead them so far. He led them into the conquering of the land but he never brought them into a rest. That is something that was reserved for Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews the contrast is made of how that Joshua led them in but could not bring them to the place of rest; that is a work that was reserved for the finished work of Jesus Christ. And once Christ made the work of salvation complete through His death upon the cross, then He has brought us now into the rest where we rest our salvation, our eternal life in that finished work of Jesus. We have that neat rest in the Lord. So Jesus has done for us that which Joshua could not do. He brought them only into the land, not into the rest, but Jesus has brought us into a glorious rest. So you get into some of the typology and it makes a very fascinating study.

Now God spoke to Joshua and the words of the Lord were actually words of encouragement. Commanding Joshua now to take up where Moses left off, and for him to lead the people the children of Israel. The beautiful promise in verse three where God said,

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses (Jos 1:3).

Now I like that because this is stepping in and laying claim to that which is already yours. Notice it's in the past tense, "Every place you put your sole, I have already given to you." Now God has already given to you a glorious, full, rich life of victory. All you have to do is go in and take it by faith, go in. "Wherever you put the sole of your foot", the Lord said, "I have given to you". You can go in and begin to lay claim to the blessings of God, to the promises of God. Let us beware lest God having given us the promise that we would fail to receive it, or enter into it. It is important that we begin to lay claim to those victories over the flesh life that God has promised to give to us. "Every place you put the sole of your foot, I have given to you."

From the wilderness from Lebanon even to the great river, Euphrates (Jos 1:4),

Now the tragic thing is that they didn't put their sole all the way. So God says, "It's all yours, every place you put your sole of your foot down, I've given it to you." They only went so far and then they quit. They never did go over the river Euphrates. They never did take all that God had given to them.

Now it is also tragically true that so many times we fail to take all that God has given to us. We fail to enter fully into that life of victory in Jesus Christ. We hesitate, or we become as they did, satisfied, "That's all we need." We become more or less complacent in our spiritual growth. We just hit a plateau and we say, "Oh praise the Lord. This is wonderful." We don't press on any further.

So when God tells them the area that is theirs, it is sad that they never did take all of the area that was theirs. They never did fully possess their possessions: that which God gave to them. That is why the scriptures are constantly exhorting us. "Let us go on, let us go on into the completeness, into the fullness." God has so much for you. God wants to do so much for you. If you'll just press in by faith, lay claim, take it, it's yours.

Now the Lord is encouraging him.

No man will be able to stand against you: as I was with Moses, so I'm gonna be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people you're going to divide this inheritance, the land. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do all that is written according to the law (Jos 1:5-7),

Now the encouragement for Joshua as God promises His presence, His power. Then as God again tells him the conditions upon which he will experience that presence and power of God.

Be careful that you observe to do the whole law: don't turn, don't deviate from it to the right, or to the left. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for thus thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success (Jos 1:7-8).

Now God is saying, "Look keep the law, don't deviate from it, for it is by this observing it day and night, meditating in it, thus thou shalt make thy way prosperous, thus you will have good success."

As we turn to the first Psalm, we read, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law does he meditate both day and night, he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"(Psalm 1:1-3). People looking for prosperity, people who are looking for success, God has given you the rules. Meditate in it, observe it, and thus shalt thou make thy way prosperous, for these are the rules to prosperity. These are the rules to success. So the conditions upon which he can know the power, the presence, the victory.

So Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the land, and command the people, saying, Prepare your food; for within three days you're gonna pass over this Jordan, and go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God gives to you to possess. And to the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, he said, [All right now, you promised Moses you were gonna go in and help us, and he reminded them of their promise, told them now to leave their wives and so forth, and to get their fighting men together so that they might cross with them, and take this land that God had promised unto them]; Until the Lord has given [verse fifteen] your brothers rest, as he has given you, and they have possessed the land which the Lord your God has given to them: then you will return and enjoy this land. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that you command us we will do, for whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. And as we hearkened unto Moses, so will we hearken unto you (Jos 1:10-17).

(Through The Bible; C 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986)

IX. PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE

"An obedience discovered itself in Fletcher of Madeley, which I wish I could describe or imitate. It produced in him a ready mind to embrace every cross with alacrity and pleasure. He had a singular love for the lambs of the flock, and applied himself with the greatest diligence to their instruction, for which he had a peculiar gift. . . . All his intercourse with me was so mingled with prayer and praise, that every employment, and every meal was, as it were, perfumed therewith." -- John Wesley.

Under the Mosaic law, obedience was looked upon as being "better than sacrifice, and to harken, than the fat of lambs." In Deuteronomy 5:29, Moses represents Almighty God declaring Himself as to this very quality in a manner which left no doubt as to the importance He laid upon its exercise. Referring to the waywardness of His people He cries: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children after them."

Unquestionably obedience is a high virtue, a soldier quality. To obey belongs, preeminently, to the soldier. It is his first and last lesson, and he must learn how to practice it all the time, without question, uncomplainingly. Obedience, moreover, is faith in action, and is the outflow as it is the very test of love. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Furthermore: obedience is the conserver and the life of love. "If ye keep My commandments," says Jesus, "ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." What a marvelous statement of the relationship created and maintained by obedience! The Son of God is held in the bosom of the Father's love, by virtue of His obedience! And the factor which enables the Son of God to ever abide in His Father's love is revealed in His own statement, "For I do, always, those things that please Him." The gift of the Holy Spirit in full measure and in richer experience, depends upon loving obedience: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," is the Master's word. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." Obedience to God is a condition of spiritual thrift, inward satisfaction, stability of heart. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fruit of the land." Obedience opens the gates of the Holy City, and gives access to the tree of life.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates, into the city."

What is obedience? It is doing God's will: it is keeping His commandments. How many of the commandments constitute obedience? To keep half of them, and to break the other half -- is that real obedience? To keep all the commandments but one -- is that obedience? On this point, James the Apostle is most explicit: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," he declares, "and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The spirit which prompts a man to break one commandment is the spirit which may move him to break them all. God's

commandments are a unit, and to break one strikes at the principle which underlies and runs through the whole. He who hesitates not to break a single commandment, would -- it is more than probable -- under the same stress, and surrounded by the same circumstances, break them all. Universal obedience of the race is demanded. Nothing short of implicit obedience will satisfy God, and the keeping of all His commandments is the demonstration of it that God requires. But can we keep all of God's commandments? Can a man receive moral ability such as enables him to obey every one of them? Certainly he can. By every token, man can, through prayer, obtain ability to do this very thing. Does God give commandments which men cannot obey? Is He so arbitrary, so severe, so unloving, as to issue commandments which cannot be obeyed? The answer is that in all the annals of Holy Scripture, not a single instance is recorded of God having commanded any man to do a thing, which was beyond his power. Is God so unjust and so inconsiderate as to require of man that which he is unable to render? Surely not. To infer it, is to slander the character of God. Let us ponder this thought, a moment: Do earthly parents require of their children duties which they cannot perform? Where is the father who would think, even, of being so unjust, and so tyrannical? Is God less kind and just than faulty, earthly parents? Are they better and more just than a perfect God? How utterly foolish and untenable a thought!

In principle, obedience to God is the same quality as obedience to earthly parents. It implies, in general effect, the giving up of one's own way, and following that of another; the surrendering of the will to the will of another; the submission of oneself to the authority and requirements of a parent. Commands, either from our heavenly Father or from our earthly father, are love-directing, and all such commands are in the best interests of those who are commanded. God's commands are issued neither in severity nor tyranny. They are always issued in love and in our interests, and so it behooves us to heed and obey them. In other words, and appraised at its lowest value -- God having issued His commands to us, in order to promote our good, it pays, therefore, to be obedient. Obedience brings its own reward. God has ordained it so, and since He has, even human reason can realize that He would never demand that which is out of our power to render.

Obedience is love, fulfilling every command, love expressing itself. Obedience, therefore, is not a hard demand made upon us, any more than is the service a husband renders his wife, or a wife renders her husband. Love delights to obey, and please whom it loves. There are no hardships in love. There may be exactions, but no irk. There are no impossible tasks for love. With what simplicity and in what a matter-of-fact way does the Apostle John say: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." This is obedience, running ahead of all and every command. It is love, obeying by anticipation. They greatly err, and even sin, who declare that men are bound to commit iniquity, either because of environment, or heredity, or tendency. God's commands are not grievous. Their ways are ways of pleasantness, and their paths peace. The task which falls to obedience is not a hard one. "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Far be it from our heavenly Father, to demand impossibilities of His children. It is possible to please Him in all things, for He is not hard to please. He is neither a hard master, nor an austere lord, "taking up that which he lays not down, and reaping that which he did not sow." Thank God, it is possible for every child of God, to please his heavenly Father! It is really much easier to please Him than to please men. Moreover, we may know when we please Him. This is the witness of the Spirit -- the inward Divine assurance, given to all the children of God that they are doing their Father's will, and that their ways are well-pleasing in His sight. God's commandments are righteous and founded in justice and wisdom. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." God's commandments, then, can be obeyed by all who seek supplies of grace which enable them to obey. These commandments must be obeyed. God's government is at stake. God's children are under obligation to obey Him; disobedience cannot be permitted. The spirit of rebellion is the very essence of sin. It is repudiation of God's authority, which God cannot tolerate. He never has done so, and a declaration of His attitude was part of the reason the Son of the Highest was made manifest among men: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." If any should complain that humanity, under the fall, is too weak and helpless to obey these high commands of God, the reply is in order that, through the atonement of Christ, man is enabled to obey. The Atonement is God's Enabling Act. That which God works in us, in regeneration and through the agency of the Holy Spirit, bestows enabling grace sufficient for all that is required of us, under the Atonement. This grace is furnished without measure, in answer to prayer. So that, while God commands, He, at the same time, stands pledged to give us all necessary strength of will and grace of soul to meet His demands. This being true, man is without excuse for his disobedience and eminently censurable for refusing, or failing, to secure requisite grace, whereby he may serve the Lord with reverence, and with godly fear. There is one important consideration those who declare it to be impossible to keep God's commandments strangely overlook, and that is the vital truth, which declares that through prayer and faith, man's nature is changed, and made partaker of the Divine nature; that there is taken out of him all reluctance to obey God, and that his natural inability to keep God's commandments, growing out of his fallen and helpless state, is gloriously removed. By this radical change which is wrought in his moral nature, a man receives power to obey God in every way, and to yield full and glad allegiance. Then he can say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Not only is the rebellion incident to the natural man removed, but a heart which gladly obeys God's Word, blessedly received. If it be claimed, that the unrenewed man, with all the disabilities of the Fall upon him, cannot obey God, there will be no denial. But to declare that, after one is renewed by the Holy Spirit, has received a new nature, and become a child of the King, he cannot obey God, is to assume a ridiculous attitude, and to display, moreover, a lamentable ignorance of the work and implications of the Atonement. Implicit and perfect obedience is the state to which the man of prayer is called. "Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," is the condition of obedient praying. Here inward fidelity and love, together with outward cleanness are put down as concomitants of acceptable praying.

John gives the reason for answered prayer in the passage previously quoted: "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." Seeing that the keeping of God's commandments is here set forth as the reason why He answers prayer, it is to be reasonably assumed that we can keep God's commandments, can do those things which are pleasing to Him. Would God make the keeping of His commandments a condition of effectual prayer, think you, if He knew we

could not keep His statutes? Surely, surely not!Obedience can ask with boldness at the Throne of grace, and those who exercise it are the only ones who can ask, after that fashion. The disobedient folk are timid in their approach and hesitant in their supplication. They are halted by reason of their wrong-doing. The requesting yet obedient child comes into the presence of his father with confidence and boldness. His very consciousness of obedience gives him courage and frees him from the dread born of disobedience.

To do God's will without demur, is the joy as it is the privilege of the successful praying-man. It is he who has clean hands and a pure heart, that can pray with confidence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."To this great deliverance may be added another: "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."The Christian's trade," says Luther, "is prayer." But the Christian has another trade to learn, before he proceeds to learn the secrets of the trade of prayer. He must learn well the trade of perfect obedience to the Father's will. Obedience follows love, and prayer follows obedience. The business of real observance of God's commandments inseparably accompanies the business of real praying.One who has been disobedient may pray. He may pray for pardoning mercy and the peace of his soul. He may come to God's footstool with tears, with confession, with penitent heart, and God will hear him and answer his prayer. But this kind of praying does not belong to the child of God, but to the penitent sinner, who has no other way by which to approach God. It is the possession of the unjustified soul, not of him who has been saved and reconciled to God.An obedient life helps prayer. It speeds prayer to the throne. God cannot help hearing the prayer of an obedient child. He always has heard His obedient children when they have prayed. Unquestioning obedience counts much in the sight of God, at the throne of heavenly grace. It acts like the confluent tides of many rivers, and gives volume and fulness of flow as well as power to the prayer chamber. An obedient life is not simply a reformed life. It is not the old life primed and painted anew nor a church-going life, nor a good veneering of activities. Neither is it an external conformation to the dictates of public morality. Far more than all this is combined in a truly obedient Christian, God-fearing life.A life of full obedience; a life settled on the most intimate terms with God; where the will is in full conformity to God's will; where the outward life shows the fruit of righteousness -- such a life offers no bar to the inner chamber but rather, like Aaron and Hur, it lifts up and sustains the hands of prayer.If you have an earnest desire to pray well, you must learn how to obey well. If you have a desire to learn to pray, then you must have an earnest desire to learn how to do God's will. If you desire to pray to God, you must first have a consuming desire to obey Him. If you would have free access to God in prayer, then every obstacle in the nature of sin or disobedience, must be removed. God delights in the prayers of obedient children. Requests coming from the lips of those who delight to do His will, reach His ears with great celerity, and incline Him to answer them with promptitude and abundance. In themselves, tears are not meritorious. Yet they have their uses in prayer. Tears should baptize our place of supplication. He who has never wept concerning his sins, has never really prayed over his sins. Tears, sometimes, is a penitent's only plea. But tears are for the past, for the sin and the wrongdoing. There is another step and stage, waiting to be taken. It is that of unquestioning obedience, and until it is taken, prayer for blessing and continued sustenance, will be of no avail.

Everywhere in Holy Scripture God is represented as disapproving of disobedience and condemning sin, and this is as true in the lives of His elect as it is in the lives of sinners. Nowhere does He countenance sin, or excuse disobedience. Always, God puts the emphasis upon obedience to His commands. Obedience to them brings blessing, disobedience meets with disaster. This is true, in the Word of God, from its beginning to its close. It is because of this, that the men of prayer, in Holy Writ, had such influence with God. Obedient men, always, have been the closest to God. These are they who have prayed well and have received great things from God, who have brought great things to pass.

Obedience to God counts tremendously in the realm of prayer. This fact cannot be emphasized too much or too often. To plead for a religious faith which tolerates sinning, is to cut the ground from under the feet of effectual praying. To excuse sinning by the plea that obedience to God is not possible to unregenerate men, is to discount the character of the new birth, and to place men where effective praying is not possible. At one time Jesus broke out with a very pertinent and personal question, striking right to the core of disobedience, when He said: "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?"He who would pray, must obey. He who would get anything out of his prayers, must be in perfect harmony with God. Prayer puts into those who sincerely pray a spirit of obedience, for the spirit of disobedience is not of God and belongs not to God's praying hosts. An obedient life is a great help to prayer. In fact, an obedient life is a necessity to prayer, to the sort which accomplishes things. The absence of an obedient life makes prayer an empty performance, a mere misnomer. A penitent sinner seeks pardon and salvation and has an answer to his prayers even with a life stained and debauched with sin. But God's royal intercessors come before Him with royal lives. Holy living promotes holy praying. God's intercessors "lift up holy hands," the symbols of righteous, obedient lives.

E.M. Bounds; Prayer; "The Necessity Of Prayer" Chapter 9; Public Domain;
Edward McKendree Bounds (August 15, 1835 – August 24, 1913) was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer.

(AMP Bible; The Everyday Life Bible; Joyce Meyers; Scripture; Commentaries; Past Pastor Sermons; Dictionary; 2006; pg 332-336)
(Word 9 Bible Software; 2010; Concordance, Dictionary, Scripture, Sermons of Saints past, Devos; Sparkling Gems From The Greek)

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