

John 2:1-11

Obedience

Introduction

This is the first miracle performed by Jesus. It took place in Cana of Galilee – eight miles north of His hometown of Nazareth. It took place during the course of a wedding where Jesus and His disciples were guests. His mother Mary was in charge and had authority over the servants. Possibly she was the sister of the bridegroom's mother.

It is interesting that one of Jesus' first public acts was to attend a wedding. Marriage is honourable to all (Hebrews 13:4), and was certainly honoured by Christ. He entered into the happiness and the rejoicing and laughter of the occasion. On this particular occasion He performed His first miracle and demonstrated His glory. Would that His presence and blessing was at every wedding and in every home – what a different society we would have.

Going to say one or two things about the miracle which He performed, and then concentrate on the most important verse in the story, which provides the key, from the human viewpoint, to the miracle.

Comments about the miracle in general

Occasioned by a shortage of wine at the wedding, either by miscalculation or because it had not arrived on time. A total disaster for the ceremony. Wine was an essential accompaniment at a Jewish wedding. It was not a potent drink – 2 parts water to 3 parts wine, the alcohol content was very low, and excess was rare among Jews. Alcohol and drunkenness was not the social problem it is today. Wine was essential because hospitality was a sacred duty, and failure to provide was an unpardonable social faux pas.

Hence Mary's wisdom to put the whole matter in Christ's hands. The result was an amazing miracle. Should not surprise us – Jesus was the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead. All things were made through Him (John 1:3).

*“Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies”*

The miracle showed forth His glory and divine power. It also provides a picture of that new life He gives, with its richness and abundance, exciting and sparkling. The 100-150 gallons of wine was more than sufficient for the wedding. Without Him, life is dull, stale and flat. So much better than life under Jewish law.

The best wine came last. The world gives the best first – never see it advertising the finished product at the end – emptiness and disappointment, and weariness of life without God, a hopeless end. The brewer and the drug-pusher never speak of the end

result – the broken bodies and the twisted minds. But with Christ, the best comes last. Here is the cross and the battle, but at the end there will be the crown and the glory.

But the miracle depends on the servants being willing to do as they are told. **Do whatever he tells you** (John 2:5). This instruction by Mary underlines the importance of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. He constantly speaks - through Bible reading, conscience, during the ministry of the Word. When will we learn to do what we are told?

Obedience – the chief mark of the Christian life

A constant theme in John's writings – “Do the truth”, “Do His will”, “Keep His commandments” etc. It proves the reality of our profession. **If you love me, you will obey what I command** (John 14:15). **You are my friends if you do what I command** (John 15:14). When sin entered, man fell – he did so through disobedience. When man is saved and given new heart, he is anxious and concerned to obey. The whole practical purpose of salvation – brought from life of pleasing self to conformity to God's will. **Who have been chosen... for obedience** (1 Peter 1:2).

The problem in many a Christian's life is not a lack of understanding, or ignorance, but a lack of obedience. The essence of being a Christian is not a wonderful emotional experience, which gives us a “high” – but simply doing as we are told.

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1952, she received a letter from her grandmother Queen Mary, expressing sympathy at her father's death, and pledging allegiance to her granddaughter. She signed it “your loving grandmother and devoted servant”. Here is the essence of our relationship to our Saviour – “Your devoted subject”.

To whom we render obedience

We need to emphasise the person whom we have to obey. There are so many clamouring voices in our world – the newspapers, TV, advertisements, pressures from society to be in fashion, be like everyone else, not to step out of line, to conform. All these voices say, “follow me”, “obey me”, and “please me”. But Mary's finger points in an entirely different direction – not to friends, family or workmates, but to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we hear people say “I would do anything for so and so” – usually someone highly respected. How much more we ought to say this of Christ. He is God's eternal Son, the Lamb who died for our sins, who gives eternal life, our Risen Lord and Master. When we look at Him, the things which were once so important become as nothing. He has more right than anyone else to command and control our lives. Those servants obeyed a stranger. Could we not obey a friend?

Extent of this obedience

Do whatever He tells you. No limit here. No restrictions or boundaries or confines. All things are to be obeyed – not some things, most things, or almost all things. God always requires everything. The Lord said to Joshua **Do not let this Book of the Law**

depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8).

When Mary gave this instruction to the servants, she knew that her son would never ask them to do something which was not for their good. And how carefully and promptly the servants obeyed – they filled the water pots up to the brim. They could not have put more water in if they tried. They could not have been more obedient. They gave “brim-full obedience”.

Just how obedient are we in our Christian life? What about our private life? What about our family relationships? What about our leisure and the way we spend our money? Is His sovereignty complete? He has to be Lord and Master. “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all” (Hudson Taylor).

Obedience always brings blessing

When the servants obeyed and filled the jars with water, the Lord responded by turning the water into wine. He transformed the wedding. All were satisfied, and Jesus showed forth His glory. The faith of the disciples was strengthened. It all depended on the servants’ obedience. When God is able to give a blessing, He first of all gives a command. **Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.... Do not conform to the pattern of this world... be transformed.... Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will** (Romans 12:1,2). Before the Father and Son can make a home with the believer, the believer has to love Christ and obey His teaching (John 14:23).

Sometimes the command may seem foolish – the wedding guests needed wine – and Jesus tells them to fetch water! The fishermen who had worked all night and caught nothing were commanded to launch out into the deep and let down their nets (Luke 5:4,5). In both cases, the result defied human expectation. Whatever we may think of the command, we must obey it and leave the rest with the Lord. We obey whether or not we agree or understand.

This is the reason why many Christians are in difficulties and are frustrated, without spiritual life, their prayer life in tatters, powerless and defeated, going round in circles. It is because, at some point in their lives, they went their own way. They knew what they had to do – but chose to wait, argue, procrastinate, rationalize, explain away disobedience, and put it off. They will know no more of the Lord’s grace till they obey. Need to go back to that place in their lives where they parted company from the Lord because of disobedience. **In keeping the Lord’s commands there is great reward** (Psalm 19:11). **If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God** (John 7:17).

Do you want to know the power of prayer in your life? Do you want to see God answering your prayers? No good reading books about it. Obey Him, and pray. Do you want God’s blessing and guidance, and to be used by the Lord? You will not get it by just wishing. You must take action and be obedient. **Do whatever he tells you.**

You will discover, to your amazement, that your Christian life will move forward, the Lord will be real and He will use you. Do what the Lord says, and leave the rest with Him.

Conclusion

Obedience is the chief characteristic of the Christian life. It is not an optional extra. We are not just obeying anybody – but obeying Him. He who is the Lord. Royalty is speaking.

The extent of our obedience is boundless. “Whatever” covers everything. It is the best way to blessing and progress in the Christian life.

God is constantly speaking to us if we are found in the places where He speaks, and if we bring open ears and open hearts. We obey His first command – to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Thereafter there are so many other things we have to do – to speak to someone, to take a clear stand at work or in the family, to obey the call to baptism or church membership, to perform a certain duty, to write a letter, to take the next step in Christian service, an apology...

The peril of listening to truths which we habitually disobey – the more we hear the same instruction and continue to disobey, the command comes with lessened force and with blunter edge. Is there any conscious disobedience in your life at the moment? Are you obeying God’s will in every area of your life? It does not suffice to offer something else as a substitute for obedience – to do a different task of our own choosing, to give more generously, to take on a position in the church. Face the issue together with God. Take action. What joy and release would come if you would only obey. What progress in the Christian life, and usefulness.