When we speak of *salvation*, many of us think first of the epistle of Paul to the Romans, as this is the fullest explanation of righteousness in Christ. If there is any place in the Bible where we might find out about obedience in relation to salvation, this is where we should look. But in fact that is not what I did. I did a search on the word obedience in the KJV, and found that the word obedience occurs in the book of Romans more often than in any other book of the Bible: five times in all. Paul develops this wonderful theme simply, so it can be remembered, like the five fingers on the hand.

The theme of obedience folds the epistle to the Romans in a loving clasp from the very first words down to the very end. "Paul, a servant of *Yahushua*, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of *Yahuwah*, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son *Yahushua* our Master, which was made of the seed of *David* according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of *Yahuwah* with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of *Yahushua*." Romans 1:1-6.

Paul begins with obedience to the faith. This is the very first step, and this is where many go wrong, right from the beginning. They separate obedience and faith, as though they were separable, or even mutually exclusive. The Gospel according to Paul will have none of that. He does not teach obedience on one hand and faith on the other. He teaches obedience of faith. The world has a church and a faith, and much to say about believing in Yahushua. But this is a vain belief, for it is faith alone. The faith that Paul knows is the obedience of faith.

What is the obedience of faith that Paul speaks about? He does not define it directly, but he gives us a strong hint. The obedience of faith among all nations for the name of Christ was his act and willingness to step out as an apostle to give the call of Christ. The thumb, the first point of salvation, is not something that we have to do or believe. It is something done for us and to us. It is the call that we receive from Christ. Obedience of faith represents first of all the call of Christ.

From the very beginning of Christ's ministry as described in the Gospels, we find Christ making this the first step of salvation. He calls one disciple after another. The obedience of faith is not that we keep the commandments or search or try to find salvation. It is hearing the call of Christ.

**Righteousness by Obedience**

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:19.

Preachers as well as congregations tend to focus on what human beings must do. Because they realize that keeping the law cannot save, they often fail to acknowledge that righteousness comes by obedience. All who are put right with Yahuwah are put right by obedience and by nothing else. They are put right by the obedience of Christ, which is perfect and full. This is the second step in the plan of salvation, in Paul's five step presentation of obedience.

One author puts it clearly as follows. "The moment the sinner believes in Christ, he stands in the sight of . . . [Yahuwah] uncondemned; for the righteousness of Christ is his: Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to him." Fundamentals of Christian Education, page 429.

While there is every reason to reject the concept of complete depravity or original sin, Paul expresses a logical balance here. Sin and death entered the world by the act of one person. No matter how well we keep the law today, we are still faced by the fact of death through no fault of our own. Therefore, it is only right and just that the remedy come in the same way as the problem: through the action of one man on behalf of all others. There is a logical foundation for the obedience needed in our salvation from sin and death not be our own, but that of another.

**Obedience unto Righteousness**

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? Yahuwah forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But Yahuwah be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have
obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Romans 6:14-18.

The vision of the dying, resurrecting, ascending, interceding, and atoning Christ transforms the human character. Love awakens the desire to be the faithful servant of obedience, where once was only service to sin.

This experience has been described in this way. “The gospel of the New Testament is not the Old Testament standard lowered to meet the sinner and save him in his sins. [Yahuwah] . . . requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments. He demands now as ever perfect righteousness as the only title to heaven. Christ is our hope and our refuge. His righteousness is imputed only to the obedient. Let us accept it through faith, that the Father shall find in us no sin. But those who have trampled on the holy law will have no right to claim that righteousness. O that we might view the immensity of the plan of salvation as obedient children to all . . . [Yahuwah's] requirements, believing that we have peace with . . . [Yahuwah] through . . . [Yahushua], our atoning sacrifice!” Review and Herald, Sept. 21, 1886.

None need be discouraged by the high level of the standard. The measure of the sacrifice is the guarantee of the power of Yahuwah to save to the uttermost. The repentant receive the blessing of Christ's righteousness which bears fruit in obedience to the commandments. It is Satan who says that the commandments are beyond keeping.

It was more common in years past to hear from the pulpit, that the "love of Christ constraineth us. We obey the commandments for the love of Yahuwah and His Christ, who offer us such great salvation." Now the message seems so often to be that because Yahuwah loves and saves us anyway, we can disobey Him as much as we like.

But Paul's concept of justification is a different one. True justification bears fruit in obedience to the commandments. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Master Yahushua, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the Yahuwah of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Master Yahushua be with you. Amen.” Romans 16:17-20.

The fourth step in Paul's study of obedience is unity in doctrine. This may come as a surprise, but it is in fact very logical. It is not really differences in outlook, logical thought, or temperament that create divisions, even doctrinal divisions. Those are in fact created by simple disobedience, the desire to rebel against Yahuwah's clear word. The spirit of obedience does in fact bring doctrinal unity.

Despite all of the arguments that people give for not observing the Sabbath of the commandment, it all comes down to whether or not there is a spirit of obedience. All of the references to shadows, the commandments nailed to the cross, the claims of freedom in Christ, that Yahushua is our Sabbath, are motivated by the simple desire not to keep the Sabbath. If those who made those claims had approached the question with the desire to obey, they would have read the texts with a different intention. They would have read them hoping to find justification for Sabbath observance rather than an excuse to disobey. And so it is with every question of doctrinal division. Some of them are unimportant matter that are raised to the attention merely in order to distract the mind from our duty towards Yahuwah and our fellow human beings.

**Unity by Obedience**

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**Full Circle: Obedience of Faith**

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Yahushua, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting Eloah, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To Yahuwah only wise, be glory through Yahushua for ever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27.

Paul closes the book of Romans, as he opened it, with nearly identical words. He returns to the theme of obedience of faith. But this time, obedience of faith is not the call of Christ. Instead of the beginning, the call, we find the end, the goal. Obedience of faith is now, at the fifth step, the "power to establish you.” At the end, as at the beginning, it is not a human achievement, but something Yahuwah does. It is the power of Yahuwah that establishes us. From beginning to end, the obedience of faith is the act of Yahuwah in human lives.
The obedience that appears in the individual life of the believer, in acts done according to the commandments, is surrounded, hedged and protected by the beginning and ending steps, acts of divine grace. The double arms of divine love surround the human act of obedience. Christ unseen stands behind the child at his letters, puts both arms around him, and guides with his own hand the clumsy had clutching the pen. The result is a response to the Decalogue, that sweet love letter filled with promises from Yahuwah. The result is a life that is a love letter to Yahuwah.

The call of Christ leads to Christ's obedience being given to the believer by grace. The realization of that gift of love constrains the believer to obedience to the law of Yahuwah by the power of grace. Such obedience results in doctrinal unity and lack of divisions among believers. The end of it all is that the power of Yahuwah establishes us in the Gospel. And that is the importance of obedience to salvation from beginning to end.

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