

# Ian Hamilton Gospel Shaped Life 2 20190216c (1)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let me read in two places in the New Testament, very familiar words at the end of Matthew 28 and again in the first letter of John chapter 2.

! The Lord Jesus has been raised bodily from the dead. He has gone into Galilee. He meets with his disciples.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

1 John 2 at verse 3. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

2 John 3.

[ 1 : 37 ] In the same way in which he walked. We saw last night that the gospel shaped life is a life that is nourished in communion with Jesus Christ.

But not simply in communion with Jesus Christ, but in communion with him as our elder brother. As those who are joint heirs with him of the glory of God.

The gospel shaped life is a life of intimate fellowship, heart to heart communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in him and through him with the heavenly Father and with the Holy Spirit. This morning I want us to move on from that and to notice that the gospel shaped life is a life that manifests itself in heart obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I were to ask you this morning, what is it that most stands out for you in Jesus' life?

[ 2 : 58 ] I wonder what you might say. Perhaps you would say, well Ian, I think it's his kindness. Or his patience. Or his majestic power.

Or his holy anger. Or perhaps his gentleness with bruised reeds. And all of those would be good answers, wouldn't they?

But there is one note that shines out of everything that Jesus was and that Jesus did.

His whole life, from womb to tomb and beyond, was a life of undeviating obedience to his heavenly Father.

Remember how strikingly the apostle Paul puts it in Philippians 2. He was obedient unto death.

[ 4 : 00 ] Even the death of a cross. The whole course of his life was one of undeviating, unyielding obedience to his heavenly Father.

But obedience is the overall rubric that shaped and defined the style of our Saviour's life.

Remember his words in John chapter 6. I have come from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And I think it's quite striking that in the first of the four servant songs in Isaiah, Isaiah 42 verses 1-4.

This note of unyielding, undeviating faithfulness is set before us. Remember how there the Lord says that he would raise up his servant.

The one who would fulfill all righteousness. Who would stop at nothing to complete the mission entrusted to him by his heavenly Father.

[ 5 : 15 ] Three times in those few verses in Isaiah 42. We find this note of undeviating, obedient faithfulness sounded for us.

Here is a servant who is going to be what Adam failed to be.

God's first servant son, Adam, failed in the garden, you'll remember. And what was the essence of this failure?

It was a failure of obedience. It was a failure of heart obedience to the God who made him and to the God who had embraced him.

In his love, remember how at the end of Luke's genealogy, Adam is called the son of God. He's not simply in the garden as an obedient servant.

[ 6 : 16 ] He has been blessed with condescending grace. But he fails as a servant son. That God in his eternal purpose had a better than Adam.

And that better than Adam comes in Jesus Christ. And what marks his life in contrast to the life of Adam was a life of unyielding, undeviating faithfulness.

In Adam we have fallen. And that willful disobedience that was prototypically in Adam has become ingenerated in the fallenness of our nature.

Our default by nature is a default of willful disobedience. And so when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, he comes to restore in us that defaced and disfigured image that was brought about by Adam's willful disobedience in the garden.

And so what the Lord Jesus Christ has come to do in his work of regeneration, in his palingenerating work, is to restore to us that pristine image that was hallmarked in the beginning with glad-hearted obedience to the will and to the word of the Heavenly Father.

[ 7 : 56 ] And so when the new birth comes to us by the sovereign, mighty work of God the Holy Spirit, what we find planted within us is this new seed of life.

And that new seed of life manifests itself instinctively, instinctively in obedience to God. We discover a new relish for God, do we not?

We find a new relish for the word of God, for the ways of God, for the commandments of God. And that's why we read those verses in the first letter of John.

Where John says in a particular context, we don't need to go into it, we don't have time to do that, where John says, if anyone says, I know God, I have communion with God, but does not keep his commandments, he's a liar.

He's a liar. John could hardly speak more strongly, could he? If you're living in communion with God, that communion will manifest itself, John is saying, in obedience to God.

[ 9 : 19 ] Obedience becomes the new default in the life of faith. But then we discover this, that the very moment God plants the seed of new life within us, that very moment that we discover a new relish for God, and for his word, and for his ways, we discover at the same time that sin yet remains in us.

And we discover this conflict, the good that we would, we do not. The evil we don't want to do, that's what we end up doing. We realize that while the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ has dealt with sin's guilt and has overcome the prevailing power of sin, it has not yet rescued us from the indwelling presence of sin.

And then added to that, as we begin to stumble our way forward in the life of faith, we discover that there is, behind indwelling sin, an enemy.

Our warfare is not, ultimately with flesh and blood, not even our own, but with principalities and powers, with the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

And we find that the tactic that Satan used to seduce our first parents into sin and rebellion against God is the same tactic he begins to use with us.

[ 11 : 03 ] Obedience to God becomes a battleground. We find Satan in a multitude of ways saying, don't take the gospel too seriously.

Don't be so extreme in your commitment to Jesus Christ. Don't be so narrow. Lighten up.

I remember as a young Christian, my parents began to adjust to the fact that I was going to church every Sunday morning and then suddenly started going on Sunday evenings. Oh son, is this not extreme?

What kind of sect have you joined? I didn't know what a sect was. And in a multitude of ways, Satan comes and we discover that obedience, while at times is sweet and delightful, oftentimes it's a struggle.

But what we need to understand is that the Christian life, or if you like the gospel-shaped life, is a life that is obedient to God.

[ 12 : 20 ] Obedience isn't tangential, it isn't peripheral. It belongs to the very essence of what it means to be a Christian. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments.

Keeping God's commandments is not legalism. It could be, I suppose, legalism. Keeping God's commandments is to be an expression of our love to Christ.

Remember when our children were small and the friends would say to them, what were you doing yesterday? Oh, we were at church. You were at church? Why were you at church?

My dad says, we go to church, we go to church. And I think that's a decent enough reason to go.

But aren't you longing for the day when someone will say to your children, you were at church?

Are you serious? Morning and evening? What were you doing that for? Where else would someone want to be who was redeemed by the blood of the Son of God?

[13:27] who has been rescued from hell and fitted for glory? Where else would I be than in the presence of the King of Kings who loved me and who gave his Son for me?

The gospel-shaped life is an obedient life. So what I'd like to do in these few moments this morning is to highlight six notes that will sound in every authentic gospel-shaped obedience-shaped life.

Number one, very basically, we need to start here, I think. We need to understand that our obedience belongs to the essential fabric of our believing lives.

Obedience isn't an optional extra. It's a divine command. Jesus said, go, make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey or observe everything that I have commanded you.

He's not giving a suggestion. Everything that I have commanded you. And there in those very well-known words, the Lord Jesus Christ is enunciating to his church that obedience to him is not some secondary issue, not something that can be bartered off.

[15:07] It belongs to the very essential fabric of our lives. Putting it simply, and I want to put it as simply as I can, Jesus Christ is not your Lord.

He isn't your Savior. In the ancient world, the days of our Lord Jesus and the Apostles, and three little words dominated life.

Caesar, Ipsy, Dixon, Caesar has spoken. Caesar's word was law. It was costly for Christian believers in those days to say, not Caesar Ipsy Dixon, Jesus Ipsy Dixon.

Jesus has spoken. We live under the Lordship of another king, a higher king, a better king. Now let me just say, but probably all of you know, but I'll say it nonetheless.

Obedience in no way makes you pleasing and acceptable to God. Only Jesus Christ, who he is and what he has done, makes you acceptable and pleasing to God the Father.

[16:26] Only as you are found in Jesus Christ does the smile of God rest upon you. Your obedience doesn't make you acceptable to God. But what obedience does do is placard.

I am not my own. I have been bought with a price. That's why our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, by their fruits you will know them.

Not by their eloquent testimony, not by their knowledge, but by lives that are transformed by the grace of God in the gospel.

God So I simply want to ask a question this morning. I ask it of myself before I ask it of you. If the gospel shaped life is an obedient life, does that speak of me?

Does that speak of you? Is your life, the default of your life, obedience? Do you begin each day with the thought, if not the words, oh how I love your law, your teaching.

[17:48] Lord, help me this day to run in the way of your commandments. Obedience belongs to the essential fabric of the life of faith.

Secondly, your obedience is one expression of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life. As I mentioned from Isaiah 42, the Lord Jesus Christ, is and continues to be in the glory, the obedient servant of the Lord.

He is the one who first said, oh how I love your law, I delight in it, he says, Psalm 40. You see, when faith brings you into union with Jesus Christ, it brings you into union with what St.

Ferguson calls the whole Christ. not just into union with a justifying Saviour who is your righteousness, but with a sanctifying Saviour who is your sanctification.

He is the wisdom from God, even our righteousness, sanctification and redemption. You cannot divide Christ. He comes to us as a whole Christ.

[19:08] Christ. And as a whole Christ, he comes to us as the one who was unyieldingly, unflinchingly, infallibly obedient in all that he was and in all that he did.

Obedience to God is one, perhaps even the most manifest expression of our union with Jesus Christ.

The hallmark of his life was obedience to the Heavenly Father. And how can we be united to him and not in some creaturely analogical way reflect that obedience to the Heavenly Father. The life that is in the vine flows into the branches that are united to it. Number three, your obedience is to be all round and never selective.

Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Now the verb there could be by extension obey, teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded you, but that's not the word that's most regularly used.

[ 20 : 43 ] The verb there actually has this idea of not only obeying but being watchfully observant in our obedience. We are to take care about obedience.

One of the great thematic hallmarks of the book of Deuteronomy is that recurring refrain take care, take care, take care.

Because obedience while there are times and seasons when it may be sweetly drawn from us, there will be other times when the pool of indwelling sin and the seductive powers of Satan and the world will all converge to turn us aside from obedience.

And Jesus is saying to his disciples and through them to his church, teach them to obey, to observe, to be watchfully careful of everything that I have commanded you.

He is Lord. He is the supreme Lord. And it is our privilege as well as our pleasure to be obedient to his every word.

[ 22 : 03 ] That's why we need to know the scriptures. We need to be much in the word to know what the Lord requires of us, what he commands of us, what he seeks sweetly by his grace and love to draw out from us.

And we are living in a world where increasingly perhaps we will be discovering how costly it's going to be to give all-round non-selective obedience to the Lord.

We are beginning perhaps in little ways to experience what our brothers and sisters in Christ have experienced for centuries. Social ostracism, difficulties within the family.

I don't think the days are that far hence. Unless it pleases God to come in power again to this land, I don't think the days are too far hence when the state might come and take children from parents.

I am not in alarm. That's by temperament, by disposition or by theology. Our obedience is never to be selective.

[ 23 : 32 ] And even when the costliness of obedience confronts us, we are to embrace it, looking to him, lo, I am with you always to the end of the age.

number four, your obedience is never to be delayed. Remember the man who came to Jesus at the end of Luke chapter 9 and said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

That was a reasonable request, a human request, a filial request. What a shock when Jesus said, let the dead, bury their dead.

You follow me. I wonder if this is something that some of us here this morning need especially to take to heart, maybe myself above it all.

The danger of delaying obedience. things. And maybe for good reasons. Remember 1 Samuel 15, the Lord has given this awful, awful command to King Saul, exterminate the Amalekians.

[ 24 : 56 ] It's a chapter that's hard to read. And if you don't find it hard to read, you'd have a different kind of humanity from me. slaughter, kill, exterminate the Amalekians.

And Samuel comes back and he sees Agag, the king still alive, the bleating of the lambs, sheep. He says, what's this?

Saul says, I've obeyed the words of the Lord. Samuel said, no, your obedience has been partial. But I think there's another element in this. Saul was delaying his obedience. I think probably, probably, Agag would eventually have been killed.

I think. Saul wanted people to see what was normal in those days, that kings would capture other kings and parade them and show their supremacy.

[ 26 : 03 ] Saul was delaying his obedience. But delayed obedience is no obedience. Delayed obedience is no obedience.

He says, I say that to my children. First obedience or no obedience. Remember, some people say, that's a little bit extreme.

Well, maybe, but that's how my children grew up. If it wasn't first obedience, it was no obedience.

And then retributive judgment broke out. I remember my two boys, a year or two back, were laughing uproariously. I said, what are you laughing at? I said, Dad, we just were remembering

when we were small and you would come in and you would ask mum and she would look in that way that she looked and you would look at us and say, boys, it's time for retributive judgment. We didn't know what it meant, but we knew it was sore. delayed obedience. Is the Lord calling you to some sphere of work, some sphere of ministry, some course of action and you're saying, well, yeah, I get it, but maybe not now.

[ 27 : 30 ] Maybe tomorrow, maybe next year, maybe when I sought this out or sought that out. obedience is never to be delayed.

Number five, your obedience is never to be qualified by providence. About 20 years ago, I was sitting in my study in New Mills, just small, semi-depressed mill town south of Glasgow, and one of our church members came to see me, nice fellow, a Christian man, similar age to me at the time, and he said, oh, he said, Ian, I need to tell you, I need to tell you, I had the most wonderful experience today.

He said, I was out driving with my wife, and we were driving through the countryside, and I took a wrong turn, and I ended up going up a one-way track, and I couldn't go any further, I had to reverse back, and I ended up reversing into a ditch, and it all came to me of a sudden.

I'd taken a wrong turn in my life. I needed to retrace my steps, I needed to get back on the main road of life, and I'm listening to him, and he finished, and I said, Ronnie, God was teaching you one thing.

He said, what was that? You're a bad driver. You're a bad driver. And he was making providence, the map of his life, and the way he interpreted, we don't know how to interpret providence.

[ 29 : 10 ] There's John Flavel, the Puritan, who said, providence is like the Hebrew alphabet, it's best read backwards. Obedience is never to be qualified by providence.

They try and just earth it. You meet a girl, a boy, they're attractive, they're good fun, they're easy to be with, they're attractive to you, but they're not a believer.

People say, but God brought them into my life. Or perhaps more seductively, they are a believer, or at least profess to be, but they're not living to glorify Christ.

Sin can be sweetly seductive, as well as grossly perverse. And God has given us his word to be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.

And if God's commandments seem to conflict with providence, believe and practice the commandment and leave God to work out the providence. Providence is never to be qualified, obedience is never to be qualified by providence.

[ 30 : 24 ] And finally, number six, your obedience is always to be evangelical and never legal. I suppose that's most beautifully brought out in the magnificently constructed 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel.

The two brothers, the younger brother and the older brother, and I think actually it's a parallel about the older brother and not the younger brother, but we tend to focus on the older brother.

father and at the end remember he says to his father, all these years I have slaved for you and you never gave me what you've given this reprobate son who's come back.

He had a mindset that he was simply a slave, he was simply doing what was dutifully required and expected of him.

But actually the younger son does the same thing. Remember he speaks to himself and he says I will go back to my father and say father I'm not fit to be your son.

[ 31 : 36 ] Make me as one of your hired servants. There was still a slavish mindset in him. The obedience that the Lord looks for and summons us to is always to be evangelical and never legal.

That is to say it is to be an obedience that is nurtured and nourished in the soil of the love of God and in the grace of the gospel.

Love makes obedience sweet. If you love me keep my commandments. That's why I said last night that we need to get into our minds and hearts the grammar of the gospel.

I need to realise why as I mentioned in Paul's letter to the Ephesians why there is only one imperative verb in the first three chapters and 40 imperative verbs in the next three chapters. obedience. The obedience that the Lord looks for and summons us to is an obedience that is to be sweetly given.

[ 32 : 56 ] I wonder if you're someone here this morning struggling with obedience. Maybe in general or maybe in some particular area of your life.

I hope if you're struggling with obedience your pastor or elder doesn't first talk to you about obedience. Let me read to you these words of John Owen as we close.

I remember the first time reading those words and I found them absolutely stunning. Above all for their pastoral wisdom.

Listen to what Owen writes. Let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ and virtue will proceed from him to repair all our decays to renew a right spirit within us and to cause us to abound in all duties of obedience.

When the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ and his glory when the soul thereon cleaves unto him with intense affections they will cast out or not give admittance unto those causes of spiritual weakness and indisposition nothing will so much excite and encourage our souls here unto as a constant view of Christ and his glory.

[ 34 : 29 ] But it's those words at the beginning let us live in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ and virtue will proceed from him and cause us to abound in all duties of obedience.

If you're struggling with your obedience your problem isn't obedience. Your problem is deeper than that.

You need to be reacquainted with who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. That's why Christians can never hear the gospel enough in its richness and its multifacetedness.

Paul speaks about the unsearchable riches of Christ because we need constantly to be reminded of who this Jesus Christ is. The glory that is natively his.

The glory that he laid aside for a season. The humiliation that he embraced out of love for us. We need to realize that obedience is nurtured and nourished not not at Mount Sinai but at Mount Calvary.

[ 35 : 43 ] It was Thomas Goodman who said if thou wouldst know what sin is go to Mount Calvary. why did he say that? Because he was dismissing Mount Sinai?

Not at all. But we don't receive the law from Moses do we? We receive it from the hand of Jesus Christ the greater than Moses. It's the same law but we receive it from the Son and not from the servant.

I think that's the essence of pastoral ministry what Owen writes there. When people are decaying and their hearts are growing cold when they're struggling when they're beginning to dally with disobedience they need to be freshly acquainted with Jesus Christ.

Nothing nothing says Owen the language is just so sour nothing will more repair our decays than a fresh acquaintedness with the grace and glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

So the gospel shaped life is nourished in communion with Christ. It's shaped and styled by obedience to Christ.

[ 37 : 22 ] Love is what makes obedience sweet. Let us pray.