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#### Knowing Him in His Death pt. 4

This week I'm going to finish up our little series on knowing Christ in His death. We've spent 2 weeks on knowing the Lord. And 4 weeks now on knowing Him in His death, or being conformed to His death. And with what we've covered already, I'd like to just wrap this up by talking about the reality of being obedient unto death.

Like all spiritual concepts, the concept of obedience has to be swallowed up in and defined by Christ Himself, or we haven't really understood it. Remember the diagram we drew last week of all of the "things" that we have learned in the church – wisdom, kingdom, love, life, and how Christ becomes the definition and substance of those things as our view of Him increases. Well, that happens with the concept of obedience as well. It takes on new meaning when we see it in the light of Christ. In the light of the New Covenant.

Perhaps you've already realized this, but every Old Covenant concept is swallowed up in a New Covenant reality. Old Covenant righteousness – consisting in man's attempts to line up with the law is, is swallowed up in New Covenant righteousness, namely Christ Himself living in you. Romans 8 – "the righteous requirements of the Law are fulfilled in you who no longer walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit". Does righteousness go away in the New Covenant? Of course not. But it is made new in Him. He is the newness and substance and reality of it.

Old Covenant circumcision – the removal of the foreskin of the flesh, is swallowed up in the circumcision of Christ. [Col 2:11](#) "in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ". Does circumcision disappear? No, it just comes to fullness. It comes to newness and substance.

Old Covenant Sabbath – a day where nothing of man is allowed to contribute. A day where man can add nothing. A day where man comes to rest. A day that is not according to the 6 day creation. A separate day. That day is swallowed up in and defined by Christ. He is that day. He is that rest. He is rest where man cannot contribute. He is the exit out of the six day creation into the new heavens and new earth. Does Sabbath disappear? Well, its no longer a natural day...because it was never just a natural day. A natural day spoke of the day that He is. You are sons of the day. Children of the day. Walk in the day. It finds newness and substance in Him.

Well, it's the same with obedience. Old Covenant obedience is swallowed up and made new by New Covenant obedience. What does that mean? Well, lets look at it.

First of all, let's define out terms. When most people think of the word "obedience", I'm afraid that the first thing that pops into their head is just "doing what you are told". Don't worry about why or what just do it. Obey.

Well, biblically speaking, that is not the best definition of obedience. I looked up obedience recently many of the definitions dealt much more with a "lining up with" than with a "doing". There were words like "agreement", "conformity" or "being in accord with". And that is really a much more helpful way to think of the word obedience. It will hopefully become plain why in a minute.

But when I think of obedience, I think of a lining up with or coming into conformity with the Word of God. I don't really think of taking orders. I think of aligning myself with His Word. What's the difference? Well, if you can grasp this, it will help you understand both Old Covenant and New Covenant obedience.

**In the Old Covenant, everything that they were commanded to do and be and sacrifice and conquer and celebrate and offer...all of it...was a picture, a type and shadow, of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him through death burial and resurrection.** Everything that God demanded, everything that He made law, was commanded because in its entirety, it pointed to salvation in Christ.

- Do Diagram of Square on one side made up of many parts. And full square on other side.

Now we know this having studied much of this for quite a while now. God says over and over again "Moses, David, make sure you construct everything exactly according to the pattern that I showed you". This has to be done exactly like what I showed you.

Why are we building this altar God? Because it gives testimony of my Son and His cross. Why are we doing this High Priest ceremony? Because it gives testimony of my Son, the great High Priest, taking you in His bosom into the Father's house. Why are we building this candlestick? Because it gives testimony of Him who will be the light of life shining in and through you. Why are we given this law? We can't keep it. Because it bears testimony of the righteous one to come. Whatever.

But make sure you do it exactly according to what I have shown you. Make sure that you are obedient to every single thing that I have told you. Make sure that you line up with my word.

Why? What's the big deal? Because in your obedience, in your lining up with all of this, you are becoming the testimony of my eternal purpose in Christ. Your agreement, your congruence with my commands equals your establishing a testimony in the earth of salvation in Christ.

So, you see...in the Old Covenant, it was a lining up with the testimony. In the New Covenant, it is a lining up with the reality. In the Old, obedience is lining up with what is to come in Christ. In the New, obedience is lining up with what HAS come in Christ. That's where we're going.

But, you see, what God commanded in the Old Covenant was a testimony in the earth of what was going to be established and fulfilled in Christ. It was things done in the flesh in the natural realm that pointed to the eternal. That is why obedience is

unto the law, unto the ordinances, unto the priesthood, etc. In order for you to be obedient to God in the Old Covenant, you had to do, to live out, the things that he established to be a testimony of His eternal purpose.

He wasn't just making a bunch of laws and ceremonies and sacrifices because he wanted to see if they would listen. Those laws, ceremonies, sacrifices were never his purpose. They were never what He wanted. The prophets tell us that multiple times. Everything he demanded, commanded, was demanded because anything contrary to that would not "line up with" His eternal purpose. It was demanded because it speaks of and testifies to the one thing that God has had in His heart before the foundation of the world.

You know, we often think of God as reactionary. He created the world and then man started doing all of this crazy stuff, and thousands of years go by while He tries to figure out how he's going to make something good out of so many bad situations. What am I going to do with this mess? Here's what I'll do with the Israelites to keep them in line. Lets try this with the Chinese. How about that in America. All kinds of goofy notions.

But God created and raised up and established all nations all peoples and orchestrated all things to first testify to, then fulfill His eternal purpose in Christ. **And so God's establishment of all of these laws and ceremonies and sacrifices and feasts and offerings, and his INSISTANCE in doing them exactly as they were established, was so that in them all He would testify to His eternal purpose, His eternal Son, His perfect salvation.**

So again, why were they commanded to obey? Just because God was God and they were not? Just because God wanted to give them random commands about not mixing wool with cotton to see if they would listen? No, they were commanded to obey because in every single command was the displaying of God's eternal purpose in Christ crucified. They were commanded to be obedient. They were commanded to line up with His testimony of His salvation. They were commanded to come into agreement with, congruence with, an accord with, all that He was demonstrating of salvation in Christ.

And when they stepped outside of obedience to what He commanded, they lost the testimony. And God was never happy about that. You can't be disobedient to this testimony and still think you're walking with God, the people of God. And so everyone who wont circumcise is cut off from His people. And everyone who works on the Sabbath are cut off from His people or stoned. Everyone who eats leavened bread on the Passover is cut off from the people. Etc. Why? Just because God is mad that they didn't do what He said? No, but because they are disobedient. They are not in line with His testimony.

And you'll see this over and over again in the Old Testament once you begin to see how important it is for God to have a perfect testimony of Christ. You'll see the story of king Saul very differently. We've made mention of this before, but let me say it again. Saul was commanded by the word of God to kill all of the Amalekites. He was commanded to cut every one of them, man, woman, and child, and beast, down with the sword. Why? Because God was mean? Obviously not. In that day it was God's judgment on their individual and national wickedness. The Bible talks about that. But more importantly, God was establishing the reality that in His land there is

only one Seed. There is only one kind. There is Christ all and in all. That was being established in the testimony.

It might sound cruel if you don't understand what is happening here. Yes, we have a temporal judgment in the earth on a wicked nation. But far more than that we have the eternal purpose of God to have a new creation, a new man, a dwelling place that He fills up with the full measure of the stature of Christ. Here we have Christ being formed in His body, destroying through death, through conformity to death, all that raises up and tries to live. You see, that is what is being shown here in this extremely important testimony.

God wasn't asking Saul to figure out another way of trying to please God. God already had a perfect Son and a perfect plan. All he wanted Saul to do was to give testimony of it in the earth. So Saul, go drive out all of the inhabitants of that land, sparing not even one, because that is how it will be in my Son's true habitation. He will put under His feet the uncircumcision of your heart, the Adamic man without mercy.

But Saul has a better idea. Well, I think I've come up with another way to make God happy. I'll just keep the best of that land and that kingdom and offer it up to God. I heard that God likes sacrifices. Look, I'll just hold on to the best cattle and sheep for sacrifices. Here is the nice looking king...maybe He can help rule God's kingdom in Israel.

Now we know that Samuel comes up and says to Saul "because of this the kingdom will be torn out of your hands and given to one who has a heart like God's". And there is a lot there – because of how we see that David is after God's heart. But then he says to Saul "Saul, obedience is better than sacrifice".

Yes, Saul transgressed a specific command of God, but much more than that, his actions were inconsistent, incongruent, a contradiction in fact, to the reality of the cross. The cross doesn't leave the best of the first and add it on to the second. The cross doesn't blend two different seeds, two different kings. The testimony of the cross was compromised through you Saul. God's eternal purpose in Christ cannot be seen through what you have done. God would far rather you have been obedient, lined up with what He said, than for you to have just tried to give him something that you think he wants.

You see, Saul had heard that God liked sacrifices. But God never liked sacrifices, except in that they pointed to Christ. David says "sacrifice and offering you do not desire, otherwise I would offer it". There's the man after God's heart. He knew these sacrifices spoke of something else. The prophets say "your soul takes no pleasure in sacrifices". It was never just animal sacrifices that God liked. It was the means by which these sacrifices gave testimony to Christ.

Saul, not comprehending this, was trying to rub God's back by giving him something he thought God liked. Trying to bless God...or whatever. But God would rather have obedience than sacrifice. Sacrifice was never a "**thing** that makes God happy". Done outside of the commanded time, place, and pattern which pointed to Jesus, it was a an offense equal to divination and witchcraft. And Samuel tells Saul that right here. It was obedience to the pattern that was pleasing. God wanted Saul's kingship, and kingdom to reflect the eternal, spiritual reality in Christ. Saul, "to obey is better than sacrifice", "disobedience is witchcraft and idolatry".

Jason, what's your point? My point is that obedience is not just doing what God said because God said it. Obedience in the Old Covenant is lining up with the testimony. And, as we will hopefully get to, obedience in the New Covenant is lining up with the reality. Lining up with the finished work. **In the Old Covenant, obedience was your life becoming the very testimony of what was to come in Christ. IN the New Covenant, your life becomes the very witness of what has come in Christ.** You line up with it. You become obedient to the truth. Obedient to faith. Obedient unto death. Because that is what this finished work has accomplished. It is has killed one man and left Another alive. Will you become obedient to that death? Will you line up with that finished work? Will you be conformed to that death? That is where we are heading, its hard not to jump ahead there.

But let me just say it again plainly so you'll see where we are going. Obedience in the first was unto the testimony of what God would accomplish. Obedience in the second is lining up with, bearing witness to, what God has accomplished in Christ. And that is through conformity to death.

But, for now, back to the testimony. Saul found out that God had a very very specific pattern to which He was bearing testimony through Israel. And you cannot mess with that pattern.

For instance, 7 times in the construction of the tabernacle, God tells Moses "make sure that you are very careful to construct this or that exactly according to the pattern that you saw on the mountain". You see, you couldn't just walk into the tabernacle and say "hey, you know what....I think the showbread would look better over here, and lets move the incense altar over there. And for pete's sake, lets cut a window in this curtain, its so dark in here.

You can't do that. Why? What is at stake if you mess with the furniture and the exactness of their pattern? What is at stake? The testimony of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is at stake. You can't mess with that testimony and think that God is not going to mess with you. You can't be disobedient to that testimony and think that that is not going to be considered idolatry. False worship. A lie. That's what Saul found out.

And you're going to see that over and over again in the Old Covenant, and if you're not looking through the testimony unto the fulfillment then you are going to misunderstand God and you are going to think he's just mean and anal and exacting. You're going to miss his nature and character, because you don't understand what obedience is unto.

You see, here comes Aaron's two sons. Nadab and Abihu. And here they come up to the altar and they are supposed to take the fire from the altar to offer before the Lord. But, rather than line up with a very purposeful type of salvation in Christ, Nadab leans over to Abihu and says "hey, can I borrow your lighter?" And they light their own fire. Oops. What does God think of that? Fire bursts out from God and consumes them. Why did God take that so seriously? What was the big deal? What was at stake there? I'll tell you what was at stake - the testimony of the eternal purpose of God in Christ was at stake. The pattern. The comprehension of salvation was at stake. Its not just that they didn't follow orders. They broke the testimony. They weren't obedient, were not in agreement with the testimony.

Or David taking the ark back to the temple many years later. The ark was always supposed to be carried on the shoulders of the priests. There is very necessary and significant reason for that. It is not up for alteration or adjustment. Well, David has this great new cart that he got for his birthday and one of the priests has a sore knee from a football injury...so he just decides that he will put the ark on his new cart and forget about that whole priest thing. Guess what happens? You know what happened.

But we look at those stories sometimes and say, "man, why was God so mad about that". Guys, he wasn't mad about it. It was complete disregard and contradiction of salvation in Christ. It was the denial and negation of His testimony. And outside of that testimony, outside of that salvation there was nothing but death. He let them see that.

We could talk much more about that, but if I go any further, I'll never get to where I want to go. Here's my main point in all of this. **Obedience is lining up with the mind of God, the thought of God, the word of God.** Obedience in the Old Covenant was the lining up with the thought of God, the plan of God, the pattern of God concerning all things that He was to do in His Son through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

**Obedience now for us, is an inward lining up with, coming into accord with, coming into agreement with, what God has done through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.** What has God done? He has crucified one kind and planted another. He has put away the first man and his creation, and come out from among the dead so that he could be the resurrection and the life of all that would live by Him. When one died, all died. And now he is the life of all who live. That is what He has accomplished. That is what all of the testimony pointed to. That is what he made sure that it pointed to. And that is what we have come to.

And so where that leaves us is needing to become obedient to His view of what is finished. Where that leaves us is needing to line up with, in our hearts, what is dead and what is alive. That leaves us needing, as we have said, to come to see and know and reckon this finished work. To come to know even as we are known.

And this really brings us to what we started to mention last week. We must come to face the reality of that death. And here is what we say - "how can I die". But that is not the question. "When one died, all died." "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men in unto myself". You're already without life apart from Him. You're already dead. You died when he died. The only question is will you accept that death in your heart. Will you allow the Spirit of God to make it real. Will you let his mind be in you. Will you come to know even as you are known. That's what is the question here.

You are dead, but will you face that death, become obedient to that death, be conformed to that death, so that you might know Him who is your life. Here's the question...will you let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ. That is what Philippians 2 is talking about. The mind working in Christ was one that would not live out from Himself - he would only manifest His Father. The mind working in Jesus was one that was a continual living by the life of Another. Dead unto self. Obedience unto death, even death on a cross. Will you let that same mind be worked into you through His Spirit?

And that is the nature and character of New Covenant obedience. As you will find it in the New Testament, it will read "obedience unto faith". That doesn't mean "obedience unto Christian religion". That means lining up with all that faith sees. And you will find Peter and John talking about obedience unto the truth. Because we come to know that truth in the inner most man. And you will see Paul talking about taking thoughts captive unto the obedience of Christ, and so punishing disobedience, because disobedience is in the heart where it is contrary to Christ. And you will find the phrase "obedience to the gospel", but again, that is not obedience to Christianity or Christian religion or Christian morals or Christian laws. That is your soul conforming to, lining up with, coming into agreement with and therefore expression of, what God has done in Christ.

Obedience in this covenant is unto death. Get thee out of His way. Obedience is unto faith. Let His mind be in you. Obedience is unto the gospel – which is the power of God unto salvation for those **who believe**.

Somebody might ask - How could we fail if it is not by might or by power but by His Spirit? How could we screw it up? If He does all things in us, If He brings the increase, if He IS the increase, and he is at work in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure....how could we screw things up? By not becoming obedient unto death. For not lining up with God has already accomplished in the cross. By not coming into a common view of what is finished – and what is finished is "I have been crucified and now Christ is the life" **To the extent that you don't share that view, to that extent you are disobedient. To the extent that you don't share that view, to that extent you are in unbelief.** It's the same thing. You are not lining up with the way the truth the life. You have become an enemy of the cross.

So our disobedience is disobedience to that which God has done. We refuse in our heart to see and know His death was our death. We refuse to see that you have nothing to offer God out from yourself. **You refuse to see as He sees and so you stand in His way.** We stand there as the way in His place. You refuse to allow His life be the life because, in your heart, you are still presenting yours.

Everything, therefore, that we do that comes out from a disagreement with this finished work, a not lining up with what He has finished, becomes disobedience. Everything that you do out from your life becomes disobedience to His death.

But when we are obedient unto death, then all that would live from me, about me, to me is brought into alignment, into congruence, into accord with, into obedience to His death.