

# Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

## Obedience Required - Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus answered, "Let it be so now." Did you ever think that obedience was required of Jesus? I know when we think of the garden of Gethsemane we think about Jesus asking God to let the cup pass from him. We can see his desire to not have to allow his life to end. He was called to obedience there. But have you ever noticed that the very beginning of his ministry, at the very start of the work that God has called him to do, Jesus was required to be obedient.

John the Baptist is right; it should be Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, not John with water from the Jordan. Jesus the Lord of Lord's and King of King's should have been the one baptizing not receiving. But what God demanded then was Jesus' obedience.

There are some absolutely wonderful stories in the bible about obedience and God's protection for those who will obey.

My favorite is about Sara and Abraham. I know that Abraham is called a great man of faith. He is clearly obedient when he leaves Ur and follows God to the new land that God has promised. But the one in the story who has always taught me the most about being obedience and trusting God is Sara.

Abraham and Sara are technically brother and sister. On two occasions, not once but twice, Abraham tells Sara to tell some king that she is his sister. The stories run very similarly. On entering some new land Abraham looks at the ladies of the land and at Sara and realizes that her beauty far exceeds anyone else's. So far so good right ladies! But then Abraham begins to reason out what men think.

When the king of the land learns of Sara, he is going to want to have this beautiful woman as one of his wives. Abraham fears for his life, because certainly either of these kings has men and power to kill Abraham and take his wife. So Abraham trusting in his wisdom instead of God's asks Sara to go along when he tells the king that she is his sister and not his wife.

And you want to see obedience and faith in action. Sara does what he husband asks and trusts God to take care of her. Sara's obedience is to God through the husband God provided. Husband's I want you to think for a minute about what I just said. Sara was obedient to her husband because God had provided her husband to her. The scripture never tells a woman to be obedient to you because you are wonderful, kind and all knowing. The scripture tells a wife to give of her best to you in trusting God who provided you for her. And when you mess up, run scared, or ignore God, she can still trust God to take care of her anyway. That is the great message for women in these stories; God does not over look you for your husbands. God watches out for you in particular because you choose to be faithful and obedient in spite of your husband.

And Sara's faithful obedience is rewarded as it always is with just what needs to happen. God had promised Abraham a family whose number would be beyond counting and that requires funds, income, wealth. Sara's faithful obedience results both in her personal safety (nothing bad befalls her) and in each kings paying Abraham great sums of wealth to take this woman away, because they have felt the curse of God since her coming into their home.

When I read the stories of the bible I learn clearly over and over that faithfulness, if I want to trust God, requires obedience. But I learn the same thing through the saints of the faith.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodist traditions, had not yet really come to trust God. That is his own estimation of himself when he leaves England to come to America both to do missionary work and to find true faith in God. America was not kind to Wesley. Georgia was not a wonderful place, he did not find God here, he worked poorly with the Indians and even worse with the colonists and powers that be but on returning to England even more dejected than when he left, he remember some Moravians whom had met that possessed exactly what he was looking for. It was his trip to Aldersgate to a Moravian

meeting following his return that would be the turning point in his faith as "his heart was strangely warmed" (a phrase we Methodists like to use because that is the way Wesley describes his own heart when he was touched by the Spirit of God).

The incident that had captured his mind took place on the ship. It was a particularly rough crossing. At one point the storm became so bad that even some of the sailors were concerned about what might happen with the ship. But Wesley came upon some Moravians in the hold of the ship who were singing and praying as though they were sitting in a church high and dry on some peaceful shore. Wesley stayed through the night with them and their faith never wavered or failed. It seemed to matter little to them whether they lived or died. They were so consumed in trusting God, so certain that they were obedient in coming on the ship doing what God was calling them to do that they had no fear. It was their faithful obedience and trust in God that inspired Wesley to seek after that kind of relationship with God.

Obedience is not necessarily easy or hard. It is not about getting what I want. Obedience is about hearing what God asks of us and doing that. I think one of the funniest things I heard was from an evangelist's wife. She knew her husband had been called to the ministry what she feared was they might be called to go to Africa or some other third world country. Where God called her husband was to Evangelism. She didn't even get a new church family, she kept her same family, her same church and had to learn to live in obedience and in faith right in the community she had always been.

Obedience is required of every disciple. What is hard for one is easy for another. What requires disciples and effort on your part may be simple and a joy for another saint. Where God lets you slide another may be required to hold fast in obedience.

When John baptizes Jesus it is for the moment. Obedience is always for the moment for the now. What God asks for this moment may change in the future, we must learn to obey in the moment not out in the future.

Seldom is obedience required from this day and forever more. Jesus was baptized by John in that moment, but he would later give the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Obedience is for the moment. When God asks we must hear and obey. One of the true keys to being a follower of Jesus Christ is obedience.

Where is God calling you in obedience today? Not what was asked yesterday, nor what is being asked of your wife or husband, mom or dad but of you. What is God's voice calling you to do if you are to obey the Spirit?