

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine Christology. Last time we finished discussing Christ's fulfilling the office of our King. Dr. Spencer, what would like to cover today?

Dr. Spencer: I want to cover Christ as our example. We have talked about his three offices, he is our Prophet, Priest and King. But in addition to those offices he is also our example. In Romans 8:29 we are told that "those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."¹ So Jesus is also our older brother and we should emulate him.

Marc Roby: That makes me think of Ephesians 5:1-2, where the apostle Paul gave us this command; "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Dr. Spencer: Yes, Paul uses the example of children, which is exactly the picture we should have in mind. Children emulate their parents and their older siblings. It is completely natural. And if we are children of God, we should emulate Jesus Christ. He is the unique God-man, he came in the flesh and so we should look to him as our example. He is our older brother and, in addition, we are told in John 14:9 that Jesus told Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." And in Hebrews 1:3 we read that "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being". Therefore, if we want to emulate our heavenly Father, we should emulate Jesus Christ.

Marc Roby: Of course we shouldn't do everything he did, some things that he did were appropriate only for him as the God-man.

Dr. Spencer: And the same thing is true of children. They shouldn't emulate their parents in everything because there are things that it is proper for a parent to do but not for a child. But, ignoring that rather obvious point, Jesus is our example. And so we should ask ourselves, what characterized the life of Christ? And a one-word answer should come immediately to mind.

Marc Roby: Yes, obedience.

Dr. Spencer: You're absolutely correct. In John 8:29 we read that Jesus said, "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." And when Jesus was facing his crucifixion, we read in Luke 22:42 that he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Jesus was fully submitted to the will of God the Father, even to the point of taking our sins upon himself and going to the cross.

Marc Roby: That is obedience in the most difficult situation anyone has ever faced.

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Dr. Spencer: In his marvelous book called *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, John Murray wrote the following with regard to Christ's work of redemption: "The Scripture regards the work of Christ as one of obedience and uses this term, or the concept that it designates, with sufficient frequency to warrant the conclusion that obedience is generic and therefore embracive enough to be viewed as the unifying or integrating principle."² In other words, obedience is the rubric under which we can place all of Christ's work. And it then follows, since we are to be conformed to his image, that obedience should also characterize our lives.

Marc Roby: We have certainly looked at quite a number of Scriptures in the past few sessions that speak about the necessity of obedience for God's people.

Dr. Spencer: And we could have looked at many more. If you read the New Testament with obedience in mind, you will see that it jumps out at you from almost every page in one way or another. In Titus 2:11-12 Paul wrote, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age".

Marc Roby: That's an important point. We are to live godly lives in this present age. And we do that by walking in obedience.

Dr. Spencer: And we must point out the obvious, it is God to whom we owe absolute, unquestioning obedience.

Marc Roby: That certainly should be obvious.

Dr. Spencer: But it then leads to a very important question.

Marc Roby: Which is?

Dr. Spencer: How do I know what God wants me to do?

Marc Roby: That is a very good question. But I think the answer is obvious, I should look in his Word and listen to his delegated authorities. But the Word is primary – even properly delegated authorities are not to be obeyed if they tell me to sin.

Dr. Spencer: I agree that that should be obvious. The Word of God is our only infallible rule for faith and conduct. But regrettably, the modern church world has turned away from that obvious truth in a number of different ways. Many professing Christians do not believe that the Bible even *is* the inspired word of God. They think it is just fallible human testimony about things God has done. It may contain the Word of God at some points, but it is up to us to somehow ferret out what that word is.

Marc Roby: That would be a rather hopeless situation. It necessarily implies that something else becomes the ultimate standard by which we judge truth.

² John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955, pg. 19

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is exactly the problem with any view that lowers the Bible to anything less than God's infallible Word. It immediately means that we have some other ultimate standard by which we judge the Bible. We spent a fair amount of time early on in these podcasts discussing the Word of God. I encourage any new listeners who are interested to go to our archive at whatdoesthewordsay.org and look at Sessions 22-25, which discuss the doctrine of the Word of God; namely, that it is sufficient, necessary, authoritative and clear for salvation. And then also look at Sessions 34-38, which present the case that the Bible is the infallible Word of God.

Marc Roby: That material does form a foundation for everything we are doing. Why else would be so interested to know what the Word says?

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. And it is also important that we know how to properly interpret the Word, which was the topic of Sessions 39-48 covering the science of hermeneutics.

But getting back to emulating God. If we use anything other than God's Word as our guide, we are getting into subjectivism and are in very dangerous territory.

Marc Roby: There is an important biblical example of God's people doing something that was in itself good, but which resulted in judgment because they weren't following God's prescribed method. I'm thinking about the case of Uzzah.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that is a great example. King David wanted to move the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, which he had properly established as the center of worship now that he was in charge of the united kingdom. The ark had been kept in Kiriath Jearim and we read about David's first attempt to move it to Jerusalem in 1 Chronicles 13. And the important point is that he did not inquire of God by praying and looking in the Word of God to see how to do it. They followed their own ideas and moved it by placing in on a cart pulled by oxen.

Marc Roby: And they thought they were being very careful and reverent. We are even told that they used a new cart. But when the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, we read in 1 Chronicles 13:10 that "The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God."

Dr. Spencer: God's response often strikes people as being way too harsh. After all, Uzzah was just trying to prevent the ark from sliding off of the cart. But we are not allowed to worship God and do his work in any way that we please. We read in 1 Chronicles 15:13 that David later said to the heads of the priestly families, "It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way."

David had the Word of God and should have consulted it and prayed the first time. If he had, Uzzah would not have died.

Marc Roby: Sin has serious consequences.

Dr. Spencer: Sin is the cause of all human troubles and it is the reason people go to hell. So, yes, it is very serious. And God is very serious about our need to worship him correctly. The prophet Amos prophesied around the middle of the 8th century before Christ, when the Jewish people

were divided into a northern and a southern kingdom. This was a time of great prosperity for the Jewish people, so you would have thought that they were enjoying the blessings of God because he was pleased with them. But that is not the case.

Marc Roby: It was a time that had a lot in common with our day. Prosperity caused the people to turn away from the true and living God in all kinds of ways.

Dr. Spencer: That's right. And we read in Amos 5:21-23 that God said, "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps."

Marc Roby: That again sounds harsh. The people were having religious feasts and assemblies and were bringing the burnt offerings required by the law, but God would not accept them.

Dr. Spencer: It does sound harsh to modern ears, but God is the Creator and we are only creatures. We must worship him in a way that is acceptable to him, not in a way that we choose. And he isn't just interested in the outward form of our religion, he is interested in the heart attitude and the lives we live. We can't worship God and our idols at the same time. He demands exclusive, obedient worship.

Marc Roby: But many modern professing Christians would object to the examples of Uzzah and Amos because they are in the Old Testament. How would you respond to them?

Dr. Spencer: I would remind them that God cannot change. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament. And we can look at two New Testament examples to show that God doesn't change. First, let's consider Ananias and Saphira. We read about them in Acts Chapter 5.

Marc Roby: We should probably set the context first. Ananias and Saphira were part of the early church in Jerusalem and we are told in Acts 4:32, 34-35 that "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ... There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

Dr. Spencer: This situation is sometime erroneously used to say that Christianity supports the idea of socialism, but nothing could be further from the truth. These people were voluntarily sharing their possessions in a very unusual set of circumstances. But, let's get back to Ananias and Saphira.

Marc Roby: Alright. In Acts 5:1-5 we read, "Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was

sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.' When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened."

Dr. Spencer: And we also read later that God also struck down Saphira when she came in and told the same lie. And, even though this is now the New Testament, I can almost hear some people again thinking this is too harsh. But God used this to set an example for the early church. He knows and judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. Ananias and Saphira were not under any compulsion to sell their property and give the money to the apostles. As Peter pointed out, they were free to keep all or part of the money. Their sin was not giving less than all of it, their sin was lying about it to try and appear more generous and zealous than they really were. And God judged them severely. He is the same God yesterday, today and forever.

Marc Roby: And you mentioned that you wanted to examine a second New Testament example.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. The church in Corinth had some problems with unity among the believers. One manifestation was, evidently, that when they gathered together for a feast that included partaking of the Lord's supper, those who were wealthy feasted while those who were poor went hungry and were publicly humiliated for not having food. Paul dealt with this problem harshly. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:17, "In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good." And then he goes on in Verses 20-22 to write, "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!"

Marc Roby: That is rather harsh by modern church standards, but it is not as harsh as God himself was with their situation.

Dr. Spencer: No, it's not. God was not pleased and the result was trouble for the Corinthian church. Paul wrote in Verses 27-30, "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

Marc Roby: And saying that some had "fallen asleep" was clearly a euphemism for dying. God had brought weakness, sickness and death to the Corinthian congregation for this extreme lack of unity and brotherly love.

Dr. Spencer: And I can again almost hear people thinking that the punishment doesn't fit the crime. But God does not change. The God of the New Testament is the same as the God of the Old Testament. He takes the unity and love between his people very seriously. As we are told in 1 John 3:10, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

Marc Roby: And so proper worship again depends on living an obedient life. The two great commandments according to Jesus are to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we aren't doing that, we are not truly God's children. In other words, we are not born again and are not on our way to heaven.

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. Obedience is the essential and necessary proof that we have been born again. It is the sine qua non of true Christianity, meaning that it is essential. As we have said a number of times, it is not the basis for our salvation, but if we are truly saved there will be obedience. In Proverbs 28:9 we are told that "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable." We must pay attention to God's law and we must obey it.

In Acts 26:20 the apostle Paul wrote that "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." It isn't just what we say that matters, but what we do.

Marc Roby: Well, I look forward to continuing this discussion, but we are out of time for today, so let me take this opportunity to remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org, and we'll get back to you.