

## Learned Obedience from What He Suffered

### Hebrews 5:7-10

Good news — I put someone to sleep in my sermon for the first time

Prayer

What makes the movie Boss Baby work?

I use “word” in air quotes, you may have heard them.

It’s an awful movie - but it’s funny to watch a chunky baby in diapers fight diabolical foes.

But what makes it odd isn’t merely the movie making, it’s the contrast between a baby doing grown up things.

A child in diapers isn’t supposed to do that.

We have some sense of the natural progression of human development. While there are deviations from the normal progression, there is a trend. A child ages, and as he or she ages, so grows the body, the mind, the intellectual capacities, the skills, and the personality.

If you go to your pediatrician, they will give you fancy little charts that track this progress in light of the normative growth of kids at a certain age.

Such a tracking mechanism doesn’t exist in areas of spiritual growth. We can’t create a normative link between one’s age and expected spiritual maturation. There are 30 year olds who just came to faith in Jesus who are immature in their faith and others who have been walking with Jesus for over a decade at that age and have seen the Lord grow and change them.

However, while we can’t say that someone is in the 70th percentile of spiritual maturity for their age, we are given clear guidance on the various tools that the Lord uses to produce spiritual growth. The question isn’t “at what age will we hit a certain mark of maturity”, rather it is “what are tools that we can expect for God to use to mature us, whatever age we are?” or more simply “how does a Christian grow”

Our passage this morning reminds us of one means of growth for all of us who long to be the person Jesus calls us to be:

7 During his earthly life, he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. 9 After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10 and he was declared by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. -- Hebrews 5:7-10

This morning’s passage invites us to ask and answer two questions:

- What did Jesus do?
- What should we do?

In a sense, this is the outline of every good sermon. We first look at the passage and ask how we see Jesus in the Scripture. Specifically here we are going to see an illustration of His role as a priest - He's going to help us understand how we should approach God.

Then, based on Jesus' work, we are able to understand how we should respond. Well, the speaker of Hebrews is a good example of this model. It's exactly what He does in these verses. He holds up the example of Jesus throughout what we commonly call the book of Hebrews. Since we are analyzing it in smaller units, the answer to what we should do isn't in these verses directly - it awaits consideration later - but I'll tease out some implications for us this morning in light of what's been said and what will be said soon.

## What did Jesus Do?

### 1. Jesus Suffered

This point is assumed on the basis of what's come before.

In verse 7 we see that the context of Jesus' activity is His death, so certainly that validates the claim that Jesus suffered.

Earlier, in verse 15, Walker also showed us that Jesus was tempted in every way.

Though Jesus did not possess an internal sin nature that predisposed Him to sin, Jesus faced the same external pressures and temptations that we all do from life in a fallen world.

And, Jesus suffered to a greater degree than most of us have and will - especially as He was unjustly murdered on a Roman cross

### 2. Jesus Prayed (v. 7)

This is a vivid, four-fold description - Jesus offered prayers, appeals, cries, and tears. Though not specifically identified, the context here is most certainly Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. You may be familiar with these prayers:

Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Matt 26:39

Again, a second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

Matthew 26:42

After leaving them, he went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

Matthew 26:44

Last week, Walker rightly reminded us that Jesus was not some bionic figure immune to human pain. This is perhaps best seen in this Garden. There a divine mystery to the intersection of divinity and humanity here. Jesus surely knew what was about to happen. He understood the cup that He would soon drink. He felt the

difficulty of being betrayed by those He loved. He experienced the gruesomes of His crucifixion. Jesus knew this. He knew it was to come. He knew it was worth it. Yet, He cried out for the Father's help. He longed for there to be another way. He wanted deliverance. So he prayed. And He prayed passionately such that He began to sweat blood. And He prayed constantly - Not once among sleeping friends, but three times Jesus prayed.

Interesting repetition

Much made of three fold denial of Peter or the three fold restoration of Peter on the beach but consider the three-fold prayer of Jesus

We will think on the latter idea, but before we shift there, consider the way this prayer starts - "If possible, let this cup pass from me."

This is the most Psalm-like of prayers of Jesus - Deliver me, Jesus prays.

### 3. Jesus Trusted (v. 7)

The speaker of Hebrews says this:

[he was heard because of his reverence](#)

Which must allude to the second-half of the prayers in the Garden:

["Yet not as I will, but as you will."](#)

[Matt 26:39](#)

["My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."](#)

[Matthew 26:42](#)

This is highly instructive - What do you tend to think of when you hear the word "reverence" - Those with a background associated with the church, likely think of formal church services or even funerals, which a forceful dad directs the children to stand reverently. Reverse, we are prone to think, is the opposite of a summer afternoon at the pool. It means you don't talk, you don't move, you might not even want to look to the right of the left.

But, the speaker of Hebrews links reverence with trust. What is reverence, well, it's doing what Jesus does here and saying, Father, I trust you.

There is a link between the ideas - properly understood reverence in a funeral for example is giving respect to something more important. The reason you stand silently. The reason you remove your cap. The reason you don't laugh is because there is something, or someone, more important than you. Jesus models this in action. He has an idea of what He would like - there to be another way than the cross - but He acts in reverence, recognizing that the Father's will is more important.

Here, Jesus flips the script on the other story in a Garden - the one where another man made the alternative choice - Our forefather Adam said, "Not as you will, but my will be done." His bite of apple was the height of

irreverence - choosing to reject God's authority and the goodness of His Word in preference for His selfish desires.

#### 4. Jesus Learned (v. 8)

On the surface, this is the most confusing verse in this section since it seemingly presents Jesus as lacking in obedience and needing to learn to obey the way a toddler might grow. The author seems to anticipate that objection, first noting that Jesus is the Son. He's the eternal second person of the Trinity. Present with God from eternity past and throughout eternity future. As such, he was God, is God, and will always be God.

However, prior to the incarnation the Son's knowledge of obedience was theoretical since He'd not walked this earth as a man. In this way, Jesus learned to obey. His knowledge became practice. Throughout His life, He was faced with temptation that prior to He'd not known experientially. He'd know the enemy, but He'd not spent 40 days facing Him in the wilderness, for example. Each time Jesus faced temptation and chose to obey, He learned what obedience actually required. From an early age this language is used of Jesus - Luke 2 records that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. How can the eternally wise God grow in wisdom? He can by putting His eternal wisdom to work in a fallen world as a man.

And what was the mechanism for this growth? Suffering - Again in verse 8 - He learned obedience through what He suffered. His theoretical obedience became concrete when He suffered. This makes complete sense doesn't it?

Let's imagine you enter adulthood knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive or that the Lord cares for His children as He does the lilies of the field.

But then you get your first pay check - There are student loans to pay off, a car that requires gas and insurance, a wedding ring to save for, ever increasing rent payments, and fears about inflation.

When do you learn that it is truly better to give than receive or that the Lord will care for you?  
It's when you trust God and give, right?

Of course, you can theoretically affirm the fact that generosity is best and God can be trusted but it is not until you are faced with a fork in the road that you learn the reality of this claim.

The Garden of Gethsemane was the final of these forks for Jesus, but He'd made the decision many times before. You'd rightly wonder how many times the mantra, "not my will but yours be done" had played in Jesus' head before they came out of His lips that day. Each time He suffered, He learned and grew.

#### 5. Jesus was Perfected (v. 9)

9 After he was perfected

The eternal Son passed through death and was raised to rule and reign at the right hand of the Father. Jesus' perfect track record in this life was forever on display in heaven, where He is now and where He is perfectly able to save all of His people (see verse 10).

**What Should We Do?**

## 1. Obey Him (v. 9)

The text supplies a singular answer that is the main goal of the whole of Hebrews. Don't flame out. Stay the course. Obey Jesus. Follow Him. He's able to save you forever, unlike any lesser god that you might turn away to follow.

And here's where the progression we've just considered is so so helpful. The outcome we are encouraged to pursue is the pattern set for us by Jesus - that we would, like Jesus, say "not my will but yours be done." Of course, this claim lies at the heart of our initial salvation, when we say to God - not my way, not my life of sin, not my rebellion from you, but yours - Christ's life, His death, His resurrection, His promises, His word, His Spirit, His church. Not mine, but His. But the process continues.

Let me try to show you how:

### → We Suffer, Like Jesus

Good news friends - you can't do much to not get this one right. You can't avoid suffering. You can't avoid difficulty. You can't avoid temptation. Yes, sometimes you suffer because you do foolish things, but often you have no control over how you suffer or when you suffer or when the suffering will stop. So step 1 is done. God has built the world so that the suffering that is necessary for you to learn obedience is a regular part of the world.

Maybe you've seen those shows where the dude is left alone in the wilderness with a singular orange and a juice box and tasked to make it out alive.

As the show progresses, you see bro man find the sustenance that he needs to grow in the most unlikely of places. Cut the bark of this tree roughly two feet from the ground and the sap tastes just like Sprite.

Not so in God's world. He has not hidden from us the means of growing us to maturity. Suffering is all around. Temptation is evergreen.

You've got a manna-like quantity of difficulty.

How do we then respond?

### → We Pray, Like Jesus

Here our fork in the road begins.

We choose prayerlessness or prayerfulness

**We Don't Pray**

**We Suffer** -----

**We Do Pray**

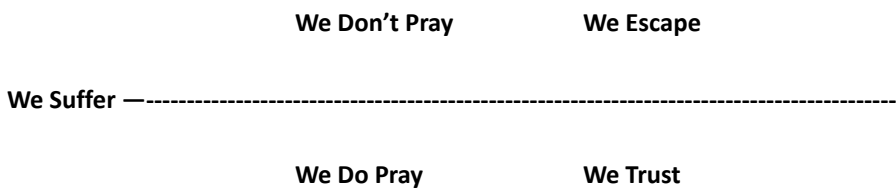
Hard things happen. Temptation comes. Suffering rears its ugly head and we either pray or we don't. Now we must be careful because sometimes we want to think we are praying but what we are really doing is talking to ourselves in our mind about how we are going to get out of whatever bad place we find ourselves.

I commend to you the prayer for Jesus - "if it's possible, let this pass."  
Jesus, the Son, turned His request to the Lord. He was honest. Simple. And clear.  
Father, could this change.

Sometimes I think we feel a bit guilty about such prayers. One of the reasons we may be prone to prayerlessness is the sense that we can't be honest with God. We've got to suck it up, have a firm bottom lip, and pretend that we don't really hate the place we find ourselves. If anywhere you might look to find such superficial prayers, it would be Jesus - since, after all, we've just said that He knew what was ahead. He knew the glory to come. He knew the necessity of His actions for His Father's purposes. Yet, He was honest with God.

Try it, would you? Simple. Clear. Specific. God, I don't like this place. I want something else. Would you, in your kindness, remedy this situation? Would you remove the cancer? Would you restore the marriage? Would you give me a new job? Would you spare the life of the child? Would you cause my wayward child to return? Perhaps the utter simplicity of a prayer that goes, "God, if possible, would you..." is a great place for you to start this week.

→ **We Trust, Like Jesus**



This progression is normative - meaning, this is the way it works. Once we find ourselves either above the line or below the line it's hard to change. For example, if you don't pray, it's going to be hard for you to consistently trust God. Or, if you do pray you are going to be far less likely to escape.

What do I mean by escape? As we saw a few weeks back, escape is the opposite of rest. The deal with pain and suffering and challenge is that we don't like to be there and we can't stay there consistently so we are going to find some way to get out. We are either going to get out of places of pain by learning to trust God and rest in His will being done or we are going to escape through addiction, worry, mindless hobbies, affairs, work, or whatever our escape method of choice happens to be.

Jesus' example moves from prayer - "God, if possible, would you..." to "whatever happens I trust you." His words - not my will but yours be done. As we've said, this doesn't mean that you love the situation you are in.

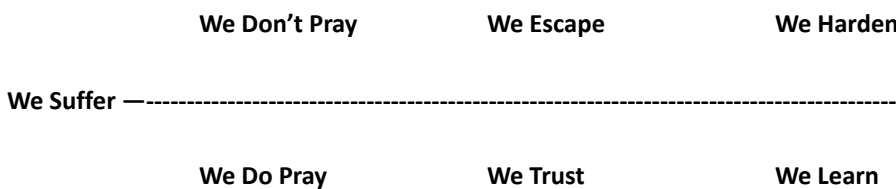
The longer you live the more you realize that everyone has things going on that they don't love. So none of us are unique there. While you can't change your situation, the Spirit of God can change your heart.

Which garden are you living in?

What happens when we trust?

→ **We Learn, Like Jesus**

**Answer:** We grow. Our maturity increases. It's no accident that the speaker here is going to follow this teaching with the familiar challenge to stop eating milk and grow up to eat solid food. Don't be a childlike adult, who's presumably walked with Jesus for decades but fails to pray and fails to trust God. Instead, grow up.

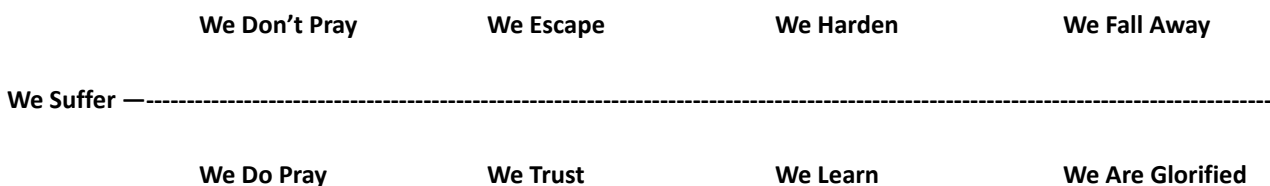


How do you grow? You apply prayer and trust to your difficulty. Here is again where the example of Jesus is instructive. Remember, He learned obedience from what He suffered means that He took theoretical knowledge and applied it to real difficulty. The same is true for you and I. The path to maturity is to apply what we know to be true to the difficulties that we face. I provided one example earlier:

- We know that generosity is best so we open-handedly give and, as we see God continue to meet our needs, we learn that God can be trusted;
- We know that our marriage is a picture of God's love for his church, so we forgive our spouses rather than holding grudges and we learn that God is patient;
- We know that we should share our faith so we take a risk to have a spiritual conversation with a neighbor and we learn that God is, in fact, able to save;
- We know that God can bring good from evil so we courageously do hard things and we learn that God is sovereign;

Friends, if you don't do this you will simply never grow in the faith - I don't care how many church services you attend or Bible studies you complete. Intellectual growth must be accompanied by practical obedience for any true growth to happen.

→ **We are Perfected, Like Jesus**



We will spend chapter 6 reflecting on the top line idea - "We fall away" - for now, look at the positive reminder in verse 9 - Jesus is the source of eternal salvation. While Jesus went from perfect life to perfect eternity, we go from imperfect to perfect. We inherit perfect bodies in a perfect world where we are no longer able to sin. Here another theoretical reality becomes practical. We've heard of heaven. We've longed for heaven. We will then see heaven. And we will know that all of the praying, all of the trusting, all of the learning, we did on this earth was worth it.