

FEBRUARY 2006 – Trust and Obey

Have you ever found yourself confused about the relationship between God's free grace and the many Scriptural exhortations to self-surrender, obedience, and the vigorous pursuit of holiness? Throughout the history of the church believers have tended to struggle in their walk with Christ because of failing to grasp what Scripture teaches about this critical question.

C.S. Lewis sheds a welcome and helpful light on this issue—light which can revolutionize our fellowship with God.

I know the words 'leave it to God' can be misunderstood, but they must stay for the moment. The sense in which a Christian leaves it to God is that he puts all his trust in Christ: trusts that Christ will somehow share with him the perfect human obedience which He carried out from His birth to His crucifixion: that Christ will make the man more like Himself and, in a sense, make good his deficiencies. In Christian language, He will share His 'sonship' with us, will make us, like Himself, 'Sons of God'..... If you like to put it that way, Christ offers something for nothing: He even offers everything for nothing. In a sense, the whole Christian life consists in accepting that very remarkable offer. But the difficulty is to reach the point of recognising that all we have done and can do is nothing. What we should have liked would be for God to count our good points and ignore our bad ones. Again, in a sense, you may say that no temptation is ever overcome until we stop trying to overcome it – throw up the sponge. But then you could not 'stop trying' in the right way and for the right reason until you had tried your very hardest. And, in yet another sense, handing everything over to Christ does not, of course, mean that you stop trying. To trust Him means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.

As we daily live in the grateful awareness of the Father's personal love for us, we will want to respond in self-surrender, obedience, and the vigorous pursuit of a life well-pleasing to him. And, great freedom, joy, and transformation will mark our lives.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 NIV



¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 130-131.