Dear Culture Contrarians,

Trust and Obey?

During my doctoral work in the mid-80s, I took a class where I was required to define all the terms used in the Bible and our evangelical culture that pertained to sanctification. Sanctification is a biblical term that means “set apart;” in this context it means “set apart” for God.

I am reviewing the work I did back then for a series of classes I hope to teach in Africa this summer. I was startled by how often, way back then, that I saw the ultimate goal of sanctification to be obedience to the will of God. Guess what? While “Trust and Obey” is part of our hymnology, it is not a biblical emphasis. We would be much closer to Scripture to emphasize “believe and fellowship with God.” “Trust and Obey” appears to be John Sammis’s 1887 understanding of Christianity, but “to Trust” (depend, rely, put your confidence in Jesus) is a result of believing and is the privilege of every believer. “And Obey” (submission, compliance, adherence to a standard or person) is actually not the goal. People are commanded to be obedient to the Gospel and to biblical doctrines (Romans 6:17, 10:16, Gal. 3:1, etc.), but our relationship to Christ is in a different category. By the way, to obey the Gospel means we must submit ourselves to a doctrine of grace, which interestingly, excludes works of obedience for our standing before God!

The goal of Scripture appears to be our continuous fellowship and enjoyment of our Creator.

Enoch had a much shorter life than his contemporaries. God enjoyed their walks together so much that one day He decided to be done with the delays: “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him,” Genesis 5:24. In Hebrews 11:5 the Greek word used for “taken” could also be translated “transport, transfer, translate;” it is a compound word made up of a preposition meaning “with” or “fellowship” and a verb meaning to “set, put, or place.” “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, *‘and was not found, because God had taken him’*; for before he was taken, he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” While the indwelling Spirit allows us to have uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord, we all know it is not the same as “Face to Face with Christ my Savior.”

Perhaps a mouse can say it better than I. In *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis, Reepicheep catches the goal of the Christian life. Believing he will find Aslan in the east, he says, “While I can, I sail east in the Dawn Treader. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, or shot over the edge of the world into some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise.”

Like Reepicheep, we are in pursuit of the presence of our Savior. Do not allow our culture to hinder your enjoyment of Jesus.

My love to you all,