Brown on Obedience

Before we leave this passage with its moving description of Christ’s total submission, we need a further reminder that obedience was not only necessary for him; it is expected also p 102 of us. Salvation is for those *who obey him*. It is important for us to see that when Jesus surrendered himself entirely to God’s will, he obeyed not only in order to honour God but also to help us to see what obedience is all about. In his exposition of this passage, Calvin says: ‘He did this for our benefit, to give us the instance and the pattern of His own submission … If we want the obedience of Christ to be of advantage to us, we must copy it.’

These verses are particularly important at a time when some Christians may find themselves tempted to bypass the constant discipline Christ demands in favour of the ‘instant’ or ‘immediate’ holiness offered by some exponents of the Christian life. This is the ‘instant’ age; if a thing is to be had, it must be had *now*. The idea goes something like this: The promises are there, claim them at this very moment and the prize is yours, whether it is instant sanctification, instant power, or instant healing. We live in a impatient society and the idea of humble submission, patient waiting and steady perseverance does not make a ready appeal. But the way of Christ was the way of persistent obedience. All his life was given to it. He strongly resisted the temptation to have it effected in a spectacular and supernatural moment.1[[1]](#footnote-1)2 He resolutely pursued the will and purpose of God. He knew that it could not be achieved in a magical minute.

Moreover, he made it clear to his followers that his way was to be their way. There was no other. The only possible route to holiness of life was by way of the cross. When the disciples expressed their horror about *his* cross, he told them about *theirs*. ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’1[[2]](#footnote-2)3 The act of taking up the cross may well occur initially and decisively at a precise moment of time. In that sense there is a crisis. But following after Christ and denying oneself is a daily, painful, costly reality that cannot be achieved by a sudden crisis, but only by a lifetime of constantly renewed dedication and obedient responsiveness to all that God requires of his people and equips them to do.

Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988).  
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1. 12 [Lk. 4:9–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk4.9-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 13 [Mt. 16:24](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.24). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)