

Pondering Obedience

By Hagan and Lynie Nash

Our Lord never insists on having authority over us. He never says, "You will submit to me." No He leaves us perfectly free to choose... But once His life has been created in me through His redemption, I instantly recognise His right to absolute authority over me." (from the 19th July, My Utmost for His Highest, Oswald Chambers)

I have been thinking about my own obedience to God in the context of friendship with Him and thinking about what Oswald Chambers wrote. Do I really get it? Probably not! But I am desperate for His friendship and want to be obedient to what He wants me to do. So in thinking about where I get it all wrong, I thought about the movie "The Horse Whisperer" and glimpsed aspects of my character, my brokenness, and my relationship to God in the horse.

The movie is about this amazing stallion that has all this power and strength but is severely injured after being hit by a truck. The accident leaves the horse physically wounded, yet the emotional scars are much deeper. So the family takes the horse to the horse whisperer – and this is where it gets really interesting.

In a corral is this broken stallion. It is cold and dark and the horse stamps his feet impatiently. Angry, he does not understand why he has been corralled. He runs in circles along the fence. Each time he passes the gate his fury and anger increases. He was meant for freedom. The pain in his flanks is agonising and yet he still yearns to run, to move, to feel alive again. He starts pushing at the fence, his fear has set in; the fear of not being in control, fear of the pain, fear of being abandoned. After all, he is stuck behind these rails because he loved his master. He made a stand when a lesser stallion would have broken free and fled. He pushes the rails again, his injured flank scraping along the rough wood. He takes another turn around the

enclosure, faster and faster, until all he feels is the pent-up hatred for his brokenness. He takes one last turn and flies over the top rail to freedom. He lands. His feet touch ground and he runs. As he moves, the air rushes up past him and the black of night engulfs him. His heart is pounding, his paws rhythmically tapping out his joyous release and he flees. It is dawn when he finally stops. He does not recognise his surroundings, but in front of him is a grassy plain with a quiet stream that gently bubbles a greeting to him. The water is refreshing and he grazes leisurely for awhile and then he stands.

In the distance he recognises the Man – the horse whisperer. A feeling akin to hatred wells up inside of him. The Man had been gentle but consistent. For weeks now, the Man's voice had spoken to him; he had stroked him, whispered to something deeper inside of him. Maybe it was not hatred then that the horse was feeling; maybe it was more the feeling of inevitability. The Man had found him. He was going to take him back to the corral; back to imprisonment. The horse keeps a close eye on the Man. If the Man came any closer, he would bolt. In the distance he sees the man crouch down next to the stream. The horse knows he is being watched, yet the Man is not coming closer. He is just there - available, but not threatening.

As the sun sinks lower into the horizon, the Man seems closer yet he had not moved or called out to the horse. The horse lowers his head, feigning disinterest. The Man is still watching him, waiting for something. Still later the Man seems much closer. He has not produced his whip yet. He has not shouted commands and does not have a bit in his hand. Instead, he seems to be chewing on a

blade of grass as well. He seems deep in thought, so peaceful, not hurried, just patiently waiting. At dusk the horse can smell the Man. In fact, he is so close he can hear the gentle, toneless humming emanating from him. The horse is entranced. The Man has still not jumped up. There still is no whip or hateful saddle, only a vibrant energy of pleasure. The horse moves closer still. The babbling brook next to the Man looks cool and inviting. Maybe if the horse just goes close enough for a drink the Man would not mind. The horse moves, but instead of lapping up the water he places his head on the Man's shoulder. Peace. Safety. Is this what the Man is whispering? It does not really matter, it is the voice of someone who cares and who knows what to do next. All the horse has to do is draw closer. The Man, he knows, will take care of the rest.

In this one scene, the broken, frightened and hurt horse, out in the field, begins to move closer. The horse whisperer stays in the same place, just crouching and waiting patiently for the horse to come to him. As the horse rests his head on the shoulder of the Man, he is obedient to what the horse whisperer wanted. In time, the horse's obedience to the horse whisperer grows and he experiences the healing he so desperately needs. I recognise my own brokenness in that horse. My heart longs for the power, the strength and the independence I think I deserve. I'm the stallion after all – be it a broken stallion. I hear God whispering in my heart, and choose to ignore it. Disobedience is what keeps me in my brokenness and away from recognising “His life [that] has been created in me through His redemption”. Just like the horse refuses to let anyone closer, I refuse to be obedient to my Friend. I feel the desires of my old man calling out; yearning for the fields that I think will bring me happiness. Yet, true safety, peace and real joy is only found when I am with my Friend; when I am obedient to His whisper.

The amazing thing is that God doesn't leave me there, nor does he insist on my obedience. Instead, I see Him sitting patiently in the fields,

waiting for me to move closer to Him, to recognise His authority in my life. He doesn't saddle me up, and force the bit into my mouth. My Friend allows me to come to Him in my brokenness and recognise His authority in my life. Oswald Chambers says that eventually the whole attitude of our life becomes one of obedience.

The other thing about the movie *The Horse Whisperer* is how incredible you eventually think the horse whisperer is. He is shown as patient, compassionate, and wise. He is consistent in his call to the horse, but never forces his will. The movie speaks volumes about the awesome character of the horse whisperer, and all because the horse responds to him. In the same way, my obedience to God speaks volumes about His character. Every time I choose to be obedient, I say that I trust my friend, He knows best, and He cares about me. If I am obedient to Him, He will sort out the rest.

A friend told me that it is necessary to break a