

20. June 2022

## Aspects of disobedience

2 Kgs 17:5-8, 13-15, 18

*The king of Assyria invaded the whole country and, coming to Samaria, laid siege to it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah on the Habor, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. This happened because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh their God who had brought them out of Egypt, out of the grip of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshipped other gods, they followed the practices of the nations which Yahweh had dispossessed for them. And yet through all the prophets and the seers, Yahweh had given Israel and Judah this warning, 'Turn from your wicked ways and keep my commandments and my laws in accordance with the entire Law which I laid down for your fathers and delivered to them through my servants the prophets.' But they would not listen, they were as stubborn as their ancestors, who had no faith in Yahweh their God. They despised his laws and the covenant which he had made with their ancestors and the warnings which he had given them. Pursuing futility, they themselves became futile through copying the nations round them, although Yahweh had ordered them not to act as they did. Because of which, Yahweh became enraged with Israel and thrust them away from him. The tribe of Judah was the only one left.*

In one of our last meditations, we had questioned why people turn to idols instead of listening to the living God. Today we can pick up this thread and consider some aspects of why man often finds it so difficult to follow the Lord's guidance. In fact, this reality is shown throughout human history, and in our times we are even faced with the apostasy of whole nations. This is all the more serious when we consider that these are peoples who had already received the message of salvation in Christ.

The people of Israel also knew God's ways and precepts well, and therefore the responsibility for their disobedience to Him weighed much more heavily than that of those peoples who had not received God's revelation and closeness with such clarity. Indeed, listening to God does not mean realising our own desires and ideas; it means being receptive to a truth that is revealed to us by God. By listening to Him, we already

begin to free ourselves from attachment to ourselves, and thus we are detached from the inclinations of our fallen nature. Obedience will no longer be merely a passive listening and acceptance, but also the concrete application of what we have heard, with our will and with all the strength of our soul.

But one's own desires and illusions can be so strong - and often reinforced by the offerings of the world - that one no longer wants to accept correction from God. One believes that one finds happiness and satisfaction in realising one's own desires and ideas; whereas it would seem that divine precepts stand in the way of our happiness and place limits on our life and the joy we long for.

Underlying this erroneous assumption is a lack of trust. If we somehow blame God because our illusions and longings for happiness are not fulfilled, it means that we do not yet know Him as He really is. In this case, the Lord's message has not yet penetrated to the depths of the person, to convey to him the certainty of God's love and to let him know that, always and in all circumstances, He wants the best for His children.

It must be borne in mind that here too the temptation of the Devil comes into play, who wants to turn man away from listening to God and to sow distrust towards Him. To do this, he likes to exploit man's inner weakness, pushing and encouraging him to give in to wrong and vain desires, and intensifying his disordered desires.

In today's reading, we had heard that disobedience to God became so great that the Israelites became obstinate; that is, they closed themselves to the Divine Will. This is the great danger of not listening to God: the will can become obstinate and even an inner resistance to the Lord can arise.

For us Christians it is important to learn to do God's will willingly, immediately and completely. Apart from bringing glory to God and joy to our heavenly Father, it will also bring us true peace. Therefore, it should be most important for us to want to recognise and fulfil God's will, even in its smallest details, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to this, there is another very important aspect: when we do God's Will with joy, we are conveying the true image of God to people, so that the Church becomes attractive to them.