

Why We Obey

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Bible Verse: Matthew 5:20
Preached on: Tuesday, April 9, 2024

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I invite you to turn to the book of Matthew for our text for this evening in our Tuesday evening study, and we're going to finish our look at this magnificent section of Scripture that we've been considering for a number of weeks, Matthew chapter 5 verses 17 to 20. Let me just remind you by way of setting the context for what we have to say here this evening, that it is the very nature, it is implicit in biblical salvation that man cannot save himself. He has broken God's law. He falls short of the glory of God. Every man, woman, and child that is ever born is born into Adam, you could say. Born under sin. Born under judgment. And he is not able to rescue himself, he is not able to deliver himself from the condition into which he is born and which he has perpetuated with his own sin. Man is under law, under the reign of sin, and he must be delivered from that if he is to have any hope of eternal life, and what we've seen as we've looked at Matthew 5:17 through 20, is that Christ fulfilled the law through his obedience. He met all of its righteous requirements. In his death, he satisfied the penalty that the law demands for sin. He did that on behalf of everyone who would ever believe in him. Christ had no sin of his own for which he was judged. The sin of his people was imputed to him and he was punished as a result of it and through faith in Christ, his perfect life, his perfect obedience to the law is then imputed to everyone who believes in him. There's a great exchange, our sin placed on Christ, his righteousness placed on us, and as a result of that, God can accept us as righteous in his sight.

Now, that means that God accepts us in Christ, not as a basis of our works. It's very important for what I'm about to say that you understand that and understand that that's a controlling principle in what we are seeing from God's word here tonight. God accepts you not because of your obedience before you came to Christ, not because of any obedience, not in any part of any obedience that you had after you came to faith in Christ. God accepts you because you are in union with Christ, you are joined with Christ. Scripture says that whom God saves, he places into Christ. We are baptized into Christ, into his death, into his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, so that everything that happened to Christ, everything that Christ did, is counted to our benefit, not because we did it ourselves, but he did it on our behalf. And so God accepts us in Christ, not on the basis of our works. We are under grace, not under law for our justification. But now understand something really critical, the law is a reflection of God's moral character. God saved us in order to make us holy, all right? God delivered us from the kingdom of Satan and put us into the kingdom of his dear Son, not so that we could just do whatever we

wanted and still go to heaven, God saved us in order to make us like Christ, to make us like the one who obeyed the law with his own perfection. He saved us in order to make us holy. The law still has a role in the life of the Christian, it still has authority in the life of the Christian, even though we do not obey it in order to obtain merit that gives us a righteous standing before God. Our righteous standing comes from Christ, but that does not mean that the law is irrelevant in the life of the Christian.

Let's look at verses 17 through 20 one final time here this evening. Matthew chapter 5 verse 17, Jesus said,

17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The righteousness of God, the life that a born-again believer lives out, is something that goes beyond the external superficial compliance that the Pharisees thought that they were rendering to the law. The law of God is written on our hearts in salvation. When God gives us the new birth, when God creates in us a new heart, when he imparts new life to it, embedded in that new life is a principle of love and obedience toward the law of God. Having established his eternal law, his law which is a revelation of his own moral character, when God gives birth to children into his family, he is doing so in order to create those who would have a like character after his own and that like character after its own will be expressed and validated by the obedience that we render to the word of God. And so the moral law still has authority in our Christian lives even though obedience is not the ground upon which God accepts us. God accepts us because of Christ. He accepts us in Christ. Our obedience is rendered in Christ and made acceptable in Christ. We do not have an independent merit apart from Christ. Everything is tied up with our union with Christ.

But the moral law is not invalidated in the life of the Christian as a result of that, and think about this with me here. The moral law teaches us the will of God. It is the will of God that we worship him acceptably as expressed in the first table of the law, the first four commandments of the Ten that are found in Exodus 20. The law directs us in our path in life. Think about it this way, if someone's tempted toward an immoral relationship, they're married and they're tempted toward an immoral relationship, and this is just so very, very basic, they come to the law and the law says, "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not violate the marriage bond." While you have direction from the law of God, it teaches your will that no matter how attractive or how tempting that illicit relationship may be, under no circumstances can it possibly be acceptable to God for you to do that. And indeed, indeed in Hebrews 13, it says fornicators and adulterers God will

judge. Keep the marriage bed undefiled. And so the law teaches us the will of God. It directs our path in life and so, you know, when men or women are tempted in that direction, the law of God properly applied would say not only must you not go any further, you must break off that relationship immediately and separate yourself never to go back. Change your phone number, change your cell phone, do whatever is necessary to break away from that immoral illicit relationship because that is contrary to the will of God.

Now, I'm just using adultery and fornication as an illustration here, but look at Matthew chapter 5 verse 29 in that regard. Because the law says you shall not commit adultery, verse 27, verse 28, that applies to the heart as well, you shall not have even the desires for an adulterous, immoral relationship in your heart, and so in verse 29, Jesus drawing out the application of the moral law of God says in that context, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." The point being, beloved, that the law of God is so authoritative to the disciple of Jesus Christ, so authoritative and so directive to his life that Jesus could speak in understandable hyperbole that anything that tempts you in the direction of violating the law of God must be cut off and separated from your life, and whatever the consequences are to ensure your obedience, that's the price you pay.

Now I realize that, you know, I was talking about this with one of our members before today, you know, our culture doesn't even know how to blush at these things anymore. You know, a generation or two ago if people were living together, living in fornication, you know, there would be a certain cultural shame attached to that. Now it's just the accepted practice. You know, people not only pretend that they don't know that it's wrong, they live without shame in it. What you and I need to see is that the law of God provides us a corrective in our thinking, our desires, and in our practice as we come to that, and it's because the moral law still has authority for us. It still directs us. It teaches us how to please God and teaches us his will, so much so that whatever is necessary to separate ourselves from that is what we do as an expression of our obedience to God.

Now, the law of God also helps us see the remaining pollution of our nature, you know, and so you think about the tenth commandment, you shall not covet, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, your neighbor's donkey, your neighbor's property, all of those things. When that law against coveting comes and you study it a little bit and think through its implication, it exposes to you the corruption that's in your heart, how much you want that which is not yours, or even worse, you don't want people to have what you can't have, you know, and all of that bound up in the sin of coveting. Well, the law comes and teaches us and exposes our pollution that we still have those sinful emotions and affections in our heart. You could also say that respect for the law of God restrains us from sinning. You know, any Christian in their right mind looks at the law of God, understands that God disciplines those that he loves, and says, "I don't want to violate the law of God because I don't want to feel the heat of divine discipline on my back." And so it restrains us from sinning, and as we obey, it promotes our blessing. There's just so

much bound up in it. The law of God could never be something that was set aside and invalidated. Jesus said right here, "Don't think that I came to abolish it, I came to fulfill it." And everything that you read subsequent in the New Testament is a further progress in the revelation in terms of this issue of what Christ said. So any interpretation of Romans 6 that says, you know, that we're not under law, we're under grace, and therefore the law doesn't apply to us and we don't have to worry about it, is a wrong interpretation by definition and a contradiction of what Jesus Christ himself said about it in Matthew chapter 5. And so all of these issues are just very, very important and far-reaching in their application and, you know, entire systems of theology rise or fall on this very principle that we're talking about here tonight.

The message tonight is entitled "Why We Obey." Why We Obey, and we want to just look quickly at six reasons why we obey the law as Christians and indeed you could say that our Christian lives are, in part, a fulfillment of the law. If you look at Romans chapter 8, this is not the first point yet, Romans chapter 8, we read in Romans 8 verse 1, we read, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That's what I was talking about. Those that are in Christ, those who have been united to Christ by faith, are not condemned because Christ is not condemned. Christ is perfectly righteous, God accepts his Son, we are in Christ and so therefore there could never be any condemnation for us who are in him.

Now going on verse 2 and looking at how our lives are in part a fulfillment of the law, we read in Romans 8 verse 2 and following, "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that," for this result, "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." We are delivered from the condemnation of the law, we are empowered to keep the law as believers, and in doing so, we fulfill the law as we walk by the Spirit of God. We honor the righteousness of the law as the Spirit works in us.

Now let me slow down there and just give you time to absorb everything that we just said; that was a pretty compact and condensed summary of things in just a few minutes. Beloved, understand this, that in 1 John it says, "By this we know that we've come to know him if we keep his commandments. The one who says I've come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him," 1 John 2:3, and 4. And so I realize that there are teachers that can twist you in knots and make you wonder about these things, but a careful, patient reading of Scripture opens these things up to us in ways that we can't deny and it's important for us, it's important for us not to make excuses for our sin, make excuses for our disobedience. We need to own it. We need to confess it. We need to repent. and thereby honor the law of God that God has established in which Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." The 19th century bishop, J.C. Ryle, guides our thinking about the moral law when he says this, "Let us not suppose for a moment that it is set aside by the gospel or that Christians have nothing to do with it. Christ refers his people to the law as their guide for holy living. It cannot save us, but let us never despise it."

And so tonight, just very quickly, we're going to look at six reasons moral obedience is the necessary mark of a true Christian. A lawless life is the mark of someone who is not saved no matter what they may say with their lips. And so we look at these six reasons for moral obedience and they develop in us, they sanctify the affections and motives of our heart so that we could obey the law of God that Jesus says brings greatness in the kingdom. Go back to Matthew chapter 5 and let me just remind you of that as we kind of launch into this, Matthew chapter 5 there at the end of verse 19 Jesus says, "whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." And so what we have before us here today from the word of God is the promise, the opportunity of present and eternal blessing for those that are in Christ if you heed what Scripture has to say here today.

So why do we obey the law of God as believers? Here's point number one. This is always a good place to start: God is holy. God himself is holy. He is without moral blemish. He is separate from the world. He is separate from Satan. He is separate from sin. And God is holy, and he tells us that, "You are to be holy as I am holy." Look at 1 Peter chapter 1. We're just going to look at a number of different Scriptures here this evening. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 14 through 16. Why do we obey the law? Why do we respect the law? Why do we consider and honor the authority of the word of God in our lives? Well, one of the reasons is because God is holy. Look at chapter 1, verse 14 of 1 Peter, which is written to Christians. Verse 14, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" Notice there in verse 14, Peter draws a contrast, and this is a contrast that you see extensively in Romans chapter 6, a contrast between your former way of life and your life now as a Christian. A Christian is someone who has been radically changed through the new birth. His former way of life is dead and gone. He is no longer under the ownership, the slave master, Satan, and sin, and self. He is dead to all of that. He has been made alive to Christ. The old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:17. And Peter is picking up on this, and this is the way, beloved, those of you that struggle with sin, this is the very starting point of how you start to grow more in your sanctification, is you come back to the truth of who you are. The old man who was a confirmed and spiritually dead sinner, that old man is gone. It is crucified with Christ as a matter of revealed fact and now you are in Christ, you are a new man in Christ, you have the Spirit dwelling within you, and those are the true manner of things. That is the way things really are for the Christian. And so here in verse 14, we're told don't let your life be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. You are dead. Don't let those things come back. Don't resurrect them. Don't be conformed to what is associated with your old life. Realize that you have a new life in Christ. The one who called you is holy and you are to pattern your life after the holy desires that he planted in you at your conversion.

And so, beloved, salvation, conversion, I'm using those terms as synonyms for the moment, salvation does not mean that we set aside obedience to God's moral precepts, his moral precepts are the manner in which our obedience expresses his holiness. And so we obey because God is holy, the God of our salvation is holy, and he calls us to be holy in

all of our behavior. Christ said, "I did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Whoever keeps and teaches these things shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." God is holy, and so therefore we obey as believers. We respect him. In fact, just look over at Romans chapter 6 for a moment. I've been doing a little study there lately, and so it's just fresh on my mind, and look at the end of Romans chapter 6 verse 21. You read, "But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?" What was the benefit of your former life as a sinner? Those things in that manner of life of which you're now ashamed, you look back with regret, what was fruitful about that? The end of those things is death. And so that's the former ignorance, the former manner of life, as Peter puts it. But now look at verse 22, "But now," former way, back then, before your conversion, but now, here in the present, here in the now, as a believer, "you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life." Beloved, you once were a slave of sin. If you are a Christian, you are now a slave of God. He owns you. You belong to him. His word, his law is your authority and so you obey in order to express that, you obey as the expression of the new life that has been given to you, and as you recognize that you're dead to sin and alive in Christ, and you start to act in obedience, then you grow in sanctification. And that, beloved, that truth is far more reaching and far more sanctifying than playing games with a biblical counselor. Verse 23, "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." God is holy. We obey as a result.

Now secondly: God planned for your obedience. God planned for your obedience and it's just important to view these things from a complete total biblical perspective, to take everything that Scripture says about these things and bring them to bear on our understanding and on our philosophy of life. Beloved, if God saved you, he saved you to accomplish a spiritual goal in you. He saved you to change your heart from loving sin to hate sin. Whereas before you loved your lust, you loved your drinking parties, you loved your foul mouth, you loved the wicked entertainment that you drank in like water, you loved the illicit relationships, God saved you not simply to deliver you from the punishment for those sins, but that you would learn to hate sin like he hates it. And so he saved you in order to change your heart from a lover of sin to a hater of sin, to change you from a blasphemer of Christ to a slave of Christ. And so we have read earlier in Matthew chapter 5, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they and they alone shall be satisfied." God pronounces blessing on those who desire righteousness and on no others.

So God planned this, this was a part of the purpose of your salvation, and as you read Scripture, and if you don't kick against the sovereignty of God in your thinking, you will find that God planned for your obedience from the foundation of the world. He planned it from the very beginning. Look at Ephesians chapter 2 with me. Ephesians chapter 2. We all know verses 8 and 9, at least we should. You should be able to recite those verses by memory. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." But then look at verse 10. So often the people stop at verse 9. I don't know why because verse 10 comes right after it. I mean, it's right there. It's not like verse 10 was dislocated and placed in, you know, 2 John someplace, and no wonder you can't find it, because it was separated

from verse 9. No, it's right there. It's connected together. "For," you're saved by grace, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," now stop there. Salvation is a work of God. We are a new creation in Christ. And why did he do this? He did this for good works. We are his workmanship created for good works. God saved you in Christ so that you would live a life of obedience to him. And look at what it says about those good works, "which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God ordered and established what your life would be like and placed circumstances and desires and peoples into your life ahead of time, it was prepared, there was a blueprint in place so that when you were saved, you start to walk in the blueprint that God established for you, you start building the house of your life according to the blueprint that God has given to you. And so God planned for your obedience. To sin against God, to sin against the law of God, is to act contrary to your nature and to act completely contrary to the very purpose of your salvation. Why would you do that? That's a dead-end road. That can't come out well. And so we obey, recognizing that God prepared it in advance for us to do.

You don't need, for the sake of time you don't need to turn there, but listen as I read Titus chapter 2. Titus chapter 2 and listen to what Scripture says here. "The grace of God," this is verse 11 and following, "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions," you renounce that. "Yes, that's what I was like. I admit that. I confess that. I know that to be true, but I repudiate it. I renounce it. I renounce everything about the old man that characterized me. I renounce the old Don Green," I say, you say your own name. You can renounce me too, but that's not the point here this evening. "I renounce my old manner of life. I utterly repudiate it and I embrace what God saved me to be. I embrace the purpose of God. I embrace the revelation of God. I embrace the law of God. And while I may falter and stumble, I own that as the principle which determines the rightness or wrongness of the way that I live and speak and think."

It goes on, you "renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." You redeem, Christ, I should say, redeemed us from that lawless disobedient mindset in life in order that we might have an obedient life, a submissive life that's zealous for good works as the law of God defines them for us. And so a desire to obey marks out the redeemed. It separates the wheat from the chaff. A desire to obey separates the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false, and we've said so much about that over the months and years that I'm not going to go off on another tangent about it.

Sinclair Ferguson says this, and I quote, "The law is not the basis on which we merit salvation, but it does provide a test to distinguish between those who belong to the kingdom of salvation and those who are outside of it. It is the real test of whether we have been born again or not. If we have been born again, then God's law has been written in our hearts and we obey it joyfully." That's why, beloved, the Apostle John can say the commandments of God are not burdensome. They're burdensome and irksome to people

who don't know God, who are rebels and hostile and enemies of God. Of course his law is burdensome and irksome to them, but to the children of God, to the people who have been born of the Spirit of God who wrote the Bible, then the law of God could never be an irksome, burdensome thing because God has created us after his image in salvation so that we would desire the things that he desires, we would love what he loves, we would have a disposition toward that which reflects his character. And so this is not a matter of external obedience to obtain some merit of our own. That's not what we're saying at all. What we're saying is, beloved, it's a whole matter of the heart, a heart attitude that says, "This is my God, this is my Christ, and this is his law, and I love God, I love Christ, and so of course I love his law, there's no space between that."

And so for young people in the room, over the live streams, trying to kind of sort out, "Am I a Christian or not?" Here's a good place to start, what do you think about the law of God? Is it something you love? Is it something you desire? Do you want to obey even if you fail? Or is it something that you're cold and indifferent to and you kind of resist and hostile and you can't wait till you get out of the house so you can live your own life, get out from under the parents that uphold the law of God before you? You know, see beloved, here's the thing, is that these things properly understood from the word of God, it's just a surgeon's scalpel that opens up your heart and lays it bare for everything easily to be seen. What is your disposition toward the word of God, the law of God? Do you want to obey? Do you not care? Because Scripture says that God planned for his people to obey him. That's the whole point of salvation is that you would live in obedience to him in this life.

Now thirdly, we've seen why do we obey? Well, we obey because God is holy. We obey because God planned for your obedience. Thirdly, you could say that obedience deepens your assurance. Obedience deepens your assurance. You can either enhance your assurance of salvation with obedience, or you can undermine it and diminish it by your sin. I already alluded to 1 John 2:3, assurance meaning that we know that we belong to Christ. We know that we are saved. That is the most precious knowledge that anyone could have. It's more important than any of our fields of study, more important than our fields of employment, more important than father, mother, son, daughter, and all family relationships. To know that you belong to Christ, that your sins are forgiven, and that you will go to heaven when you die is the most significant piece of knowledge that the human heart could ever attain, and contrary to many brands of Arminian theology, contrary to Catholics who condemn those who say, "I know that I'm saved," Scripture teaches us that God intends for you to know that you are saved and to rest in the assurance of that, to rest in the knowledge that Christ has you in his hand and he will never let you go. Can you imagine a healthy parent, a modestly well-adjusted parent of children raising these children up and wanting, planning and ordering life so that child doesn't know whether he's in the family or not? Can you imagine the travesty of such a home environment? "I don't know if you're my kid or not. Where did you come from?" Now sometimes parents joke on things like that and you shouldn't. Everything about parenting should be to assure that child, I'm talking about as children are growing up, I realize with adult children there are other challenges that come, but a Christian parent wants that child to know that they're loved and wanted and accepted and part of the family and always will be.

Well, how could it possibly be, how could there possibly be systems of theology that say that a God of love is not like that toward his children? That God designed a system where you could never know if you're in or out? That you could be in the family one moment and out the next, and you could breathe your last and you just don't know, you're taking a leap into the unknown as to whether you're going to be in heaven or you're going to be in purgatory or you're going to be in hell? It's a total travesty and a blasphemy against the character of God. God intends for you to know. God knows. God knows life is hard enough as it is. God knows there's enough sorrow as it is without compounding that by an eternal uncertainty about where your soul is. I realize that people lack assurance, but beloved, understand that it's not because God designed salvation to produce people who had no assurance, that that's the design of God is against assurance is quite to the contrary. It's the other way around, you know, otherwise Paul would never say at the end of Romans, "I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." That's why Paul can say in Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That's why Paul can say in Romans 5:1, you know, we therefore having peace, you know, we have peace with God, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. You know, you say, "Why are you going backwards through those? Why did you start at the end of chapter 8 and then go to 8:1 and then 5:1? Shouldn't you go the other direction?" It doesn't matter. You get the point. You can follow me.

All of this is designed to assure us of the love of Christ, assure us of the perfection of his redemption, assure us that we belong to him and the point is, for tonight, is that as you obey, as you pursue obedience to the law of God as a reflection of having been born again, you enhance, you develop your assurance with your obedience or you diminish it by sin. I already alluded to 1 John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know him." We know, we have assurance, we're confident that we've come to know him. We're confident that we're in Christ. We're confident that we have an eternal relationship with Christ if we keep his commandments. Obedience is one mark among others. It's not the only mark. It's not the only ground of our assurance, but it is one of the grounds of assurance that obedience shows that we really belong to him.

Beloved, listen, listen, many of you have really, really cute kids, and they, you know, it's a delight to know them and to interact with them. I love that aspect of a pastor. And your children, to one degree or another, your biological children reflect something of your physical characteristics. Well, in a spiritual new birth, the true child of God is going to reflect the spiritual characteristics of the Father who gave birth to him and obedience to his law, to his word is one aspect of that. James 2:18 says, "someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." I have faith and my life has changed as a result.

One of the things that we do, many of you know, in the membership process at Truth Community Church in baptism is tell us your testimony, and one of the things that we ask and look for in so many words is how you say that you have come to faith in Christ. Praise the Lord. How has your life changed as a result of that? What is different? What is

past and what is present? What is former about your life and what is new about your life? Because we manifest this to others with the fruit that is shown in our lives. Jesus said, "By their fruit you will know them." You know, and a bare profession of faith without a change of life is not to be received, not to be affirmed. You know, somebody lives in an unbroken, adulterous, fornicating relationship, says, "I came to Christ," and then just continues living in that same pattern without any change or moral trouble or troubled conscience or anything, can comfortably live in sin just like he did beforehand, that's not conversion. That's not being born again. And so the point here is that as we live out an obedient life, it develops assurance, and that's a good thing. Everybody should want to be more assured of their salvation.

Fourthly, not only does obedience deepen our assurance, we obey from love for Christ. We obey from love for Christ. And, you know, in some ways this point alone should settle the matter, shouldn't it? If we really believe that Christ died on our behalf, that he suffered on our behalf, that he prays for us now, that he watches over us, he cares for us, he loves us, he acted on our behalf, he loved us when we were enemies, he died for us while we were sinners, helpless and enemies of his, and he did that self-initiated voluntarily for us, and we say that we know him, beloved, how could anyone not love him in response to that? We love, 1 John 4:19, because he first loved us. And so Christ is precious to us as Christians. We gladly obey. We wouldn't want it any other way. We want to be like him. We want to please him because we love him and that's the way Jesus said it would be. John 14 verse 15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 15:14, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." You know, and when we remember the cross, we remember his sufferings, we remember that cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And realize that the spiritual torments of infinite degree that he absorbed on our behalf, he did in love for us, beloved, how can we not love him in response? And if we love him, how can we disobey him? How could we do anything but have a heart disposition of orientation toward loving Christ and obeying him? Even if we do it imperfectly, we do it sincerely, just as a child that loves her parents may have times where she's naughty, but there is a principle of love and obedience that she has toward her parents because she loves and appreciates them. Well, in a far greater way, we obey. Why do we obey? We obey because we love Christ. We obey because it deepens our assurance. We obey because God planned for our obedience. We obey because God is holy. You know, and we've still got two more to go, but you just start to see that there is this collective, there are these collective considerations, reasons. There is this whole sense of our affections and our theology, all that point us in the same direction.

Point number five: we obey to serve Christ. We obey to serve Christ and, beloved, we've looked in recent weeks and months so often about in our series on Revelation in particular, I guess is what I'm remembering, that we're slaves of Christ, bond servants of his. He is the Master. He is our authority. He owns us. He loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, it says in Revelation chapter 1. Jesus Christ is Lord, and he is our Master. We are his subjects. We are under his reign. We are under his dominion. He is our prophet, priest, and king. And as a result, one of the ways that we serve him, we serve him with our obedience. Luke chapter 6 verse 46 says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord,

Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Christ, you are my master. Speak, your servant listens. What would you have me to do? He's revealed it in his word, he's revealed it in his law, and that principle of service and obedience and love, beloved, this is something that animates the inner man, it animates our internal affections so that what people perceive and what people see of us is secondary in motivating concern to the surpassing desire that we have to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind. And so we do it out of a heart desire not to put on a show for men. If men observe it, fine, who cares? In 2 Timothy 2, verses 19 and 21, we read, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." We obey to serve Christ.

Now finally, sixth and finally, let me just give you one final review here. Why do we obey? We obey because God is holy, because God planned for our obedience, because obedience deepens assurance, we obey from love for Christ, we obey to serve Christ, and sixthly and finally, we obey because God blesses obedience. He blesses obedience. God honors our obedience by blessing us now and by blessing us in eternity. Go back to Matthew chapter 5 as we come full circle here. Matthew chapter 5 verse 19, where we read that whoever does them, look at the end of the verse for the sake of time, "whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." There will be an honor associated with our obedience. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10, I'll just read it again for the sake of time as the evening gets away from us so quickly, doesn't it? 2 Corinthians 5, verse 10, we read this, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Let me read that again and let that sink in, this divine appointment that each one of us has, we are moving inexorably toward this moment described in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 10, where when life is done, when Christ calls us, when Christ comes back, however the timing of that works out, we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account and he will give to us what is due for what we have done in the body, whether good or evil.

And so we long to have that blessing. I want God to bless me, don't you? I want God to bless you. That's why I call you to obedience. That's why the word calls you to obedience, calls you to repent of everything that is known in your life that is contrary to his word, confess it, be cleansed by the blood of Christ, and begin to walk afresh in obedience to him. You know what the best part of this is? The best part of this is that God has not left us to our own strength and ability in order to carry this out. Turn to Philippians chapter 2. This is the last text that we'll look at. God did not leave us to our own resources. He put the Spirit of God within us. The Spirit of God indwells us. The self-same Spirit of God which raised Jesus Christ physically from the dead, is the same Spirit that is at work inside us to enable us to live in this kind of obedience that we have been speaking of here this evening. God himself works through the Holy Spirit to help us in the task. We're not alone. Christ is with us always, even to the end of the age. So in Philippians 2 verse 12 we read, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Why? And how can you do that? "For it is God who

works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." God stimulates you through the word and shapes your heart through the word so that you are inclined to obedience as the Spirit continues to sanctify you, and as you undertake obedience and working it out, thinking it out, speaking it out, the Spirit of God is there to help you to work it out all for the good pleasure of our holy God. And so, beloved, why do we obey? There's lots of reasons. And so let us aim at the obedience and the unity of spirit in the body that marks those who are truly redeemed.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we walk through life, you bring us joys and sorrows, you bring us challenges and opportunities. As we sing, in your wisdom, you mingle joy with peace and rest, you mingle toil with peace and rest. And through it all, Father, regardless of what the outer circumstances are that may be, help us to recognize the path of obedience that is set before us as we walk day by day, and then help us to walk in it, that we might grow in assurance, that we might manifest our love and service to Christ and one day know the full blessing of God on our lives. Help each one here and joining us over the live stream to that end. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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