

DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

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A SERMON
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*“But they have not all obeyed the gospel.”
 Romans 10:16*

EVEN concerning those who have heard the Gospel, it can still be said, “They have not all obeyed the gospel.” And this, dear friends, is one of the plainest proofs of the deep depravity of human nature. We might have expected that if God in the exercise of His marvelous mercy, should stay His hand, and not at once execute the sentence of justice upon the guilty—if, in His surprising grace, He should devise a way by which He could be just, and yet could justify the ungodly—I say, we might have supposed that the moment men heard that good news, they would immediately believe it. Seeing that they had offended God, and so had brought themselves into a state of condemnation, we might have thought that as soon as ever the God of grace mentioned the possibility of forgiveness, they would have sought it at His hand.

It could never have been imagined—apart from the utter ruin of man's nature by the fall—that we should have needed so many ministers, so much pleading, so many years of longsuffering on God's part, and above all, that we should have needed the display of the almighty power of the Spirit of God Himself, before sinners would be willing to obey the Gospel. Yet so it is, and nothing that I know of beneath high heaven, so clearly proves that man's heart is absolutely estranged from all that is good, and that the sinner has really become demented through his sin—as that man rejects the Gospel of grace, refuses divine mercy, and often stops his ear to the voice of God's messengers, and in every case, except where the Holy Spirit graciously renews the nature, tramples underfoot the very blood of the Son of God.

O man, you who were at first like the sons of the morning—nay, more than that, you who were made in the likeness of God—you whose place was in Eden, the garden of the Lord—how low have you fallen, and into what a sad state of estrangement to your God have you come through your sin!

That, however, is not my subject at this time. I want, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have a time of earnest pleading with those who have not obeyed the Gospel. It is true of many who meet with us in this house of prayer, as it is of those who assemble elsewhere, that though they have often heard the Gospel, yet “they have not all obeyed the gospel.” Perhaps some of those, who hitherto have been disobedient, will now obey it. May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

I. My first observation upon the text will be this. THE GOSPEL COMES TO MEN WITH THE FORCE OF A COMMAND, “They have not all obeyed the gospel.”

But you cannot speak of obeying anything which has not the authority of a command, it is clear, therefore, that the Gospel comes to men in the form of a command, and that it has the force of a command.

I shall not stay to quote the large number of texts, which I might easily bring to your recollection, and all of which, unless they are wrested from their true meaning in order to suit a certain form of theological teaching, prove that the Gospel comes to men as a command.

I will mention just one such passage, “The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” So it is not left optional to you whether you will accept the Gospel or not, it is not said to you, “You may, if you will, accept it, or you may, if you please, reject it.”

You cannot reject it without incurring the guilt of disobedience to a divine command. The Gospel does not come to you as an ordinary thing, which is of little or no importance to you. It is true that you may reject it, but not without frightful peril to your soul. It does not humbly crave an entrance into your heart, but it demands it—claims it as a right. It comes not as a message from one of your fellow men, but with divine authority it comes to you from the mouth of God Himself, directly through His Word, or indirectly through the faithful preaching of His servants. Therefore, if you reject it, you are disobedient to God Himself, like those of old to whom He said, “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

To reject the Gospel of Christ is to incur great sin. He Himself said, concerning the Holy Spirit, “He will reprove (or convince) the world of sin,” and then, almost immediately, He added, “of sin, because they believe not on me,” as though it were the very head and front of sin—the flower and crown of sin—its virus—its quintessence of guilt—that men believe not on Christ.

And further, the command to men to believe the Gospel has the death penalty attached to disobedience. Let me remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ upon this point, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Remember too, the solemn utterance of our Lord concerning the universal ministration of His Word, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” So you see, the Gospel is given to us as a command, and disobedience to it involves a direful penalty.

Now, beloved, possibly you will say to me, “How is it that the Gospel—God’s glad tidings to guilty man—the Gospel which is full of grace, which is, indeed, all of grace from top to bottom, comes in the shape of a command? Does it not tend to make your preaching legal?” My answer to that question is that if it did have that effect, I could not help it. I am bound to preach what I find in God’s Word. Whatever may be the consequences, I must not alter the form of my Master’s message.

But it strikes me that the Gospel is put in the form of a command, first of all, *to encourage poor seekers when they are coming to Christ*. Their question generally is, “May we come?” As a rule they ask, “May we really believe in Jesus Christ? May we dare to do so?” Now, if there is a bare invitation, or if that invitation is limited to persons of a certain character, the eye of the sinner would be fixed upon that character, and he would look to see whether he was one of those invited. We do not want him to turn his eyes toward himself, yet that is exactly what he usually does, and this keeps him from fixing his eye upon Christ, where alone salvation is to be found. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord has put the Gospel message into the form of a command.

You certainly may do what you are commanded by God to do. Even despair itself cannot raise a question about that matter. If I am commanded to keep the Sabbath holy, then I am, certainly, permitted to do so, and if I am commanded to worship God, I am certainly permitted to worship Him. So then, if I, as a sinner, am commanded to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, I need not stay to look at what I am, or who I am, or to search for any goodness or preparation in myself, and I may be assured that I may believe in Jesus because I am commanded to do so.

I have sometimes tried to illustrate this truth by supposing that Queen Victoria were to send an order to some poor man, in the lowest slums of London, to go down to see her at Windsor Castle. Just imagine that this were possible, that the message ran somewhat to this effect—“that So-and-so, of such and such a place, is hereby commanded to come to the royal palace at Windsor, and he will stay away at his peril.” Well now, that man would probably feel that such a summons could hardly be true. He would turn it over, and look at the signature and the seal, but if it proved to be genuine, I fancy I see him starting off to get to Windsor as quickly as possible. If he spoke about his errand and said, “I am going to see Her Majesty,” everybody in the third-class carriage would laugh. “Ridiculous,” they would say, “how can you be such a fool? It is absurd.” “But,” he says, “I am commanded by the Queen to go. Look,

there are my orders in her own handwriting. What I am to do—such a poor, uneducated man as I am—I do not know, but you see, it says, ‘he will stay away at his peril,’ so I dare not stay away.”

You see, the very sternness of the expression—the strong form in which it was put—had in his eyes the force of law, and so really became an encouragement to him to go, and gave strength to him in going.

In a similar manner, when the Gospel commands the sinner to repent, it does in effect, say to him, “Let your reasonings, and your questionings, and your doubtings, and your fears, all be put to death by this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the Lord’s own command being quite a sufficient warrant for you to come to Him.” As He bids you come, you certainly may come. “Preach the gospel to every creature,” is our Lord’s command, you are a creature, so we preach it to you, and tell you, in Christ’s name, that “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” It is put in that shape to encourage you, even by driving you, to come to Christ, and trust in Him to save you.

I have no doubt also, that the Gospel is given to us in the form of a command, *in order to embolden the proclaimer of it*. I have often, when I have finished preaching, said to myself, “I have told the people the Gospel, and I have pleaded with them to come to Christ, but I wonder whether I have quite done it as my Master would have me do it.” You know that true preaching is done in the name of Jesus, and with His authority. It is a sort of miracle working, for we have to tell the dead to live—a most absurd thing to do, except that God having told us to do it, we do it, and the dead live. We say, “Hear, ye deaf; and see, ye blind,”—things which look, to human reason, out of all order, yet since we are bidden to do so, we do it, and God blesses it, and the deaf do hear, and the blind do see, and the dead are raised to life.

Well, I have said to myself, “Have I, by divine authority, spoken to my hearers like that? Having this treasure in an earthen vessel, has the excellence of the power of God really shone forth?”

Now, sinners, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who is shortly to come again to judge the quick and the dead, I deliver to you these commands in His name, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you,” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.” These are no dogmas of the church, they are the plain truths that I find in the Scriptures, and in the name of Jesus, I charge you to obey them. O, Spirit of the living God, make the people obedient in this the day of Your power! So this is another reason why the Gospel is put in this shape, that the minister of Christ may speak with confidence, commanding men, in his Master’s name, to repent, and believe in Jesus.

But dear friends, there is a further reason, and that is *to secure the honor of God*. The Gospel is not an offer from an equal to an equal. When the Gospel says, “Believe and thou shalt live,” it is not the voice of a man speaking to another man. I charge every sinner who is trifling with the Gospel, to beware what he is doing, for it is God his Maker, who also will be the Judge of the ungodly, who sends out the invitations to the great Gospel wedding feast. If you refuse them, you are not refusing the invitations of a man, but the invitations of God, your Creator, and your Judge, you are really rejecting Him who will shortly come, in the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory, to punish the disobedient by banishing them forever from His presence. So it is most fitting that the Gospel should not come like a common invitation, but that it should come with all the force at its back which a divine command can have.

Again, remember that although the blessings of the Gospel are all gifts of divine grace wherever they are found, they are nevertheless—I think I may say every one of them—*things which the law itself demands of men*.

For instance, the Gospel comes to you in order that you may have new hearts, yet the ancient prophet proclaimed God’s promise, “A new heart also will I give you.” The Gospel comes to you in order that you may be pure, but you ought to be pure apart from any Gospel, you have no right to be impure. The Gospel comes to you in order that it may put away your sin, but you have no right to have any sin. That sin of yours, you have committed against God willfully and wickedly, and the guilt of it lies at your door. The Gospel comes to you in order that you may be reconciled to God, but you ought never to have

been His enemies, and as long as you continue in enmity against God, you are sinning every moment. The Gospel truly brings you the gifts of God's grace, but at the same time, it brings you, to a large extent, that which should have been yours, and would have been yours, if you had not sinned against the righteous God, and broken His most holy law.

Moreover, *the demands of the Gospel upon you are, after all, only the duties which rightly devolve upon you*, for to believe God, is the bounden duty of every one of those whom He has created for His praise, since not to believe Him, is to make Him a liar. Sometimes when I am talking to persons privately about their souls, I have peculiar power given to me by God the Holy Spirit in charging this great sin home upon their conscience.

Very likely, the good sister is here who last week, came a second time, and asked me to pray for her, and I told her that I would do nothing of the kind, and then I added, "I have set the Gospel plainly before you, I have told you that if you trust Christ, you shall be saved. What am I to pray for? Am I to ask God to make another Gospel to suit your fancy, or to save you in some way apart from faith in His Son? I cannot and I will not do it. If you say that you cannot trust Christ, you practically make God a liar, and if you are determined to commit that crowning act of guilt, your blood will be upon your own head."

It startled her when I set the truth before her in such a fashion as that, and then, when I again explained that this simple matter of trusting in Jesus Christ and Him crucified was the great stipulation of the Gospel, I was delighted to find that the Lord led her at once to do it, and while she confessed her faith in Christ, there and then, light and liberty came to her soul which had been long in darkness and bondage.

It seems to me to be the most awful thing in the world for a man to say, "I cannot believe God." Many a time, when such a remark has been made to me, I have said, "Now, if you say to me, 'I cannot believe you,' I shall feel hurt by your want of confidence, but you may say it a thousand times to me rather than say it once concerning God, who cannot lie."

O dear souls, you who are not yet believers in Christ, remember that it is nothing but God's right that He should be believed, and nothing but Christ's right that He should be trusted, and that both in saint and in sinner, distrust of God is a sin that is not to be excused for a moment, and that if it is not repented of and forsaken, it will have to be dealt with by the great Judge of all at the last dread assize!

Then, with regard to repentance, when a man has done wrong, surely it is his bounden duty to repent of that wrong, and though he never will do so until the Spirit of God leads him, and all true repentance is in every case, a spiritual gift, yet is it equally true that in so far as a man is in the wrong, he ought at once, with all his heart and soul, to seek to get right—to make such recompense as he can, or if none can be made, certainly to confess his fault, and humbly to seek pardon for it. It seems to me that our own conscience tells us that this is true, and so confirms what we find plainly recorded in the Word of God.

As you all know, the Gospel is set forth under the figure of a feast, and those who would not come to it were punished for not coming. It is also described as the prodigal's return to his father's house. The parable of the prodigal son does not mention everything connected with a sinner's repentance. For instance, there is nothing said in it about the Spirit of God leading the prodigal to resolve to go back. It looks as if he came of his own accord, but Christ did not attempt to teach all theology in that one parable. It must have been true that the prodigal was brought back by the secret working of the Spirit of God upon his heart.

At the same time, it was always the prodigal's duty to come back, because he never ought to have gone away, and there never was a moment from the time that he "took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living," that he was not wrong in so doing. There never was a moment while he was feeding the swine, that he was not wrong in being there at all, and if he had acted rightly—only that sinful heart of his would not let him act rightly—he would long before have said, "I will arise and go to my father."

So I think I have plainly proved to you that the Gospel comes to men with the force of a command.

II. Now, in the second place, let us inquire—WHAT THEN ARE THE CLAIMS OF THE Gospel TO OBEDIENCE!

Any unconverted person here may say to me, “You tell me, sir, that I cannot hear the Gospel preached, and then go away, and reject it at my pleasure, without being guilty of a great sin.” I do tell you that, and the reason is, that *there is the authority of God Himself at the back of the Gospel message.*

When we lift up Christ in our preaching, as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent upon the pole, and cry to our hearers, “Look and live,” we are not speaking our own words, we are uttering the words of God. To reject our words, would be a small matter, but to reject the testimony of God is guilt of the deepest dye.

My dear friend give me your hand, and as I press it, let me look you in the face and say, “When God Himself sets forth Christ as the only propitiation for sin, will you turn your back upon Him, and reject so great salvation?” God grant that you may no longer do so if you have done so until now! The Gospel claims our obedience because it has the authority of God at the back of it.

Then, next, to disobey the Gospel is, evidently, *to slight the motive, the wonderful love, of the God who sends it to us.* Oh, what wondrous love is displayed by God in the Gospel—the love which made Him give up His only begotten Son to bleed and die—the love which allowed our Lord Jesus to be nailed to the cross by His own voluntary act, that He might suffer in our stead!

Oh, the amazing love of God, that He should proclaim a complete amnesty and oblivion for all our past transgressions—that He should say to us, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”—that He should even entreat men to repent, and send to them such a message as this through His servant Isaiah, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon!”

That God should do all this, and yet that man, with his proud heart, should throw it all aside as worthless, is to insult the love of God, and it seems to me to be a cruel thing—a monstrous thing—for sinful men and women to do.

And further, not to obey the Gospel is *to perpetrate a high affront to our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Son of God Himself died upon the cross at Calvary, and for me to say that I do not want His death—that I regard it as a superfluity, for I am righteous enough without Him, or else that even if I am sinful, yet I care not that I am and I will run the risk of divine anger, but I will not have this wondrous Christ to be my Savior—this would be indeed awful. If ever angels could shiver with horror, and be astounded at the enormity of human guilt, it would be when they heard a man say, concerning Christ, by his actions, if not in so many words, “I will have nothing to do with Him, neither do I care anything for Him.”

Dear friends, again I wish I could get near to each one of you, instead of addressing you in a crowd at this long distance, and if you have not obeyed the Gospel, I should like to put to you this question, “Can you, will you, still refuse to obey it when your disobedience is really a rejection of the dying Son of God, and an insult to the almighty love of His Father?”

Disobedience to the Gospel is also *an act that contains the concentrated essence of rebellion against God.* Suppose a king promulgates a certain law, and one of his subjects violates every command of that law. The king summons the lawbreaker into his presence and says, “Friend, do you really mean not to obey my law? Do you regard it as harsh and severe?” The man replies that the law is harsh and severe, “but,” he adds, “that is not the main matter. I do not acknowledge your authority over me, and I hate you.”

I can suppose it to be just possible that this gracious king might say to his rebellious subject, “Listen, friend, I am going to ask you to do something which is wholly for your own good—not for my benefit, but for yours. I hear that you are in debt to the amount of £10,000, and I am willing to give you that sum of money so that your debt may be discharged, will you accept it?” “No,” says he, “I will not, I would rather go to prison, and die there.”

Do you not at once see what the venom is of this man's animosity against the king? Yet alas! his conduct is constantly being imitated by rebellious sinners. Here is a man who positively says, by his actions, "I would sooner be damned than I will obey God's Gospel, I would rather lie in hell forever than accept His Son as my Savior. I would not obey His law, but to show my desperate hatred to Him, and everything that is His, I will not obey His Gospel either."

"Oh!" say you, "I do not mean that." Perhaps you do not, but that is the meaning that lies in the very center of your disobedience, just as a worm is sometimes hidden in the center of certain fruit. You have not perceived it yet, but it is there.

"But," says another, "I—I have not definitely said that I never would obey the Gospel." No, but you have continued definitely to disobey it up to this very moment, for you are still an unbeliever. "Oh!" say you, "but I am no skeptic, I believe that what the Bible says is all true." That admission only makes your case all the worse, for if it be the truth, why do you not believe it? If Christ be indeed true, why do you not believe on Him?

This is most monstrous conduct, and it shows that you have made up your mind that you will not have the great King of kings to reign over you. I wish, however, that you would look that fact clearly in the face, for I hope that when you have done so, the Spirit of God will convince you of the sin in which you are living, for that would go a long way towards leading you to seek cleansing from that sin through the precious blood of Jesus.

Brethren beloved, pray that God will bless the message I am trying to deliver, in deep solemnity of soul, to poor sinners, ask Him to send it home to their hearts by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit. Do you know, my dear unsaved hearer, what God's estimate of the Gospel is? Do you not know that it has been the chief subject of His thoughts and acts from all eternity? He looks upon it as the grandest of all His works—that marvelous scheme of redemption by the blood of His only begotten Son—that wonderful way of salvation by the sinner ceasing to trust in himself, and believing in Jesus Christ, God's Son.

You cannot imagine that He has sent this Gospel into the world to be a football for you to play with—that you may give it a kick, as Felix did when he said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." You surely cannot believe that God sent His Gospel into the world for you to make a toy of it, and to say, as Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and then put away all thought of it out of your souls. You cannot even speak of it irreverently without committing a great sin.

In my own heart, I often feel that I dare not think of that wondrous monument of infinite love—the Gospel provided for guilty sinners—without, like Moses, putting off the shoes from my feet, because the place whereon I stand is holy ground. Do not, I pray you, make merry over the rejected Gospel, for its blood will be required at your hands.

I appeal to your own consciences, if they are not drugged. Do you feel right—you who have been my hearers for so many years—do you feel right in remaining as you are—hearers only, and not doers of the Word? Do you feel that if Christ were to come at this moment, you could justify your position before Him? If, instead of this pulpit being before you, the great white throne were set and the books were opened, do you suppose that you could stand up and say, "God, I am doing right in hearing the Gospel, yet not believing it, I am doing right in sitting in this pew impenitent"? You know that you could not talk like that, you would be speechless then, like the man without the wedding garment.

You know too, that there is nobody to blame but yourself for your impenitence. I am clear of your blood, for I have faithfully warned you. Your own conscience will confirm what I say. Suppose you turn to any of the people of God now present, and ask them what they think of their unbelief in the days before they came to Christ. Ask them whether they consider that it was sinful, they will tell you that when God the Holy Spirit quickened and awakened them, and brought them to trust in Jesus, they felt as if they could never forgive themselves for having so long refused the invitations of the Gospel and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. They wept, and mourned, and sighed as they remembered how they had

resisted the Spirit of God, and grieved Him in a thousand ways—checked conscience, stifled conviction, rushed into sin after sin in order to escape from the Gospel if they could. They feel that all this was gross sin, and they are good judges in such matters, for the Lord has taught them by His Spirit, and you may depend upon it that it is indeed sinful.

And God Himself still says, as He did of old, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” If you do, think what the consequences must be. Does not everybody know that suicide is a terrible sin? Yet the suicide does, as it were, but kill his body, but what guilt must be his who sends his soul to hell by disobeying the Gospel!

To be a suicide, a man need not use a knife or a rope, he can starve himself to death if he pleases, and as for him who willfully refuses to eat the bread of heaven, and damns his soul by a suicidal rejection of Christ—who shall pity him? Who among the angels, who among redeemed men in glory can pity the man who chose his own delusions and follies, and would rather perish eternally than obey the simple command of the Gospel, “Believe and live”? I pray you to lay these solemn truths to heart.

III. I come now to my third point, which is this—WHAT IS THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IS SPOKEN OF IN OUR TEXT? “They have not all obeyed the Gospel.”

Do you ask, “What must we do to obey the Gospel?” I will put the answer briefly and compactly. First, *you are to hear it*. God said of old, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live,” And the reason for that command is that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” But beloved, you must take heed how you hear as well as what you hear. You must not listen to the Gospel as you would to a story or a song. “Hearken diligently unto me,” saith the Lord, “and eat ye that which is good.”

There must be, in your listening, a deep, earnest desire to know the truth, and to know the whole of the truth, especially that part which condemns you, and humbles you in the very dust. That is what you must especially seek to hear. O sinner, do not wish to be flattered with falsehood! I have no doubt that you would like it, but that is the very worst thing possible for you to hear.

Avoid a sugared Gospel as you would shun sugar of lead. Seek that Gospel which rips up, and tears, and cuts, and wounds, and hacks, and even kills, for that is the Gospel that makes alive again, and when you have found it, give good heed to it. Let it enter into your inmost being. As the rain soaks into the ground, so pray the Lord to let His Gospel soak into your soul. Open the windows of your heart, God help you to do so, by devout attention and prayerful meditation, that the blessed, perfumed Gospel may come floating through, and penetrate into the deepest recesses of your soul.

But hearing the Gospel is not enough, the plain command is, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” Now, to believe is to trust, it is the practical proof that we have rightly heard the Gospel if we believe it. This is the Gospel in brief. Christ died for sinners. He stood as the Substitute for all who trust Him. I trust Him, and so I know Him to be my Substitute. God has punished Him instead of me, and therefore He cannot also punish me, for that would be punishing the same offense twice, which the righteous God will never do. Christ has paid all the debts of all believers. Whosoever trusteth Christ is a believer, so his debts are paid, he is free from liability on account of them, and therefore he may well rejoice. The essence of obedience to the Gospel lies in giving up all self-confidence, all attempts to save yourself by your own merit, and a simple reliance upon Jesus Christ to save you.

When you go to your banker, you take your gold, and give it into his charge, and he takes care of it for you. You do not go to him, five minutes afterwards and say, “If you please, sir, I should like to see my money, to make sure that it is safe.” If you did so, the banker would advise you to take it away, and not bother him anymore. But you do not act so foolishly, for you have confidence that the banker will keep your money safely, and so you must act in the same way with your soul.

Come, now—may the Spirit of God help you to do so!—and make Christ your Banker, deposit your soul with Him, and then say, with the apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” That act, which is a continuous one throughout the entire life, is the act that saves the soul.

“Ah!” says one, “but then repentance is also required.” Just so, and *he who trusts his soul with Christ is sure to repent*, for true repentance makes a man talk thus—“Has Christ really saved my soul? Has He been so loving and gracious to me as to make me His forever? Oh, then, I am ashamed that I did not love Him before! My mind is changed towards Him now, yet, oh, how I wish that I had not acted as I have done! I grieve to think how I have sinned against God, and now He has forgiven me. I pray Him to help me henceforth to be His faithful servant, to do His will, and not my own.” Genuine repentance is a complete change of mind towards all things through knowing the love of God shed abroad in the heart by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember next, that the Lord Jesus Christ requires that, henceforth, you should *own Him as your Master, your Teacher, your King, your Leader, your All in all*. You are to come forward, and confess that you belong to Him, and that you have given yourself up wholly to Him, and He has ordained the way in which He would have you do it outwardly that others may see, namely, by being buried with Him in baptism unto death—not that this will save you, for you have no right to observe this ordinance till you are saved, but when you have believed in Jesus, you are to make the Scriptural confession of your faith, avowing that you are Christ’s by being dead, and buried, and then raised up again in the very significant type and symbol which our Lord has ordained.

You are to be obedient to what Christ has commanded, and to follow the example He has set before you, and I, for my part, will never, while this tongue can speak, leave out any part of my Master’s Gospel, for though I have sometimes almost wished that there were no outward ordinances, because in these days they are so grossly perverted, put out of their proper place and order, and exaggerated—yet, God forbid that we should ever attempt to alter His Word!

It is written in the Scriptures, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Our Lord Jesus said, as I have often reminded you, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.” So then, it seems to me that Christ requires of you a wholehearted faith, which will make you give yourself up to Him to be His forever, and to be obedient to each one of His commands as the Spirit of God shall enlighten you concerning them.

Now, young man, here I stand, as a recruiting sergeant, and I would to God that I could enlist you beneath the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot come, and ask you, each one personally, whether you will enlist or not, but I trust that my Master’s power is going with His Word, and that He will constrain you to enroll yourself among His followers, but again I remind you that it is not a matter of option with you, you are bound to do it, you ought to do it.

“Well,” saith one, “I am willing to enlist, how am I to do it?” How does any soldier enlist? He takes the shilling, does he not? This is the way to become a Christian, take Christ. You have not to give anything, you have to take, and to take Christ, and as soon as ever, by that act of faith, you have received Christ, you are a soldier of the cross. The soldiers of God, however, are not “short-service men.” They are in for life, and for eternity. When we take Christ, we take Him as the husband takes his wife, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, for life or for death. Ay, but our union to Christ goes further than that, death comes in, and breaks the conjugal tie, but with us—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever;
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I hope that there are some here who are saying, “I see what the Gospel commands, and I am willing to obey, but I have not the strength that is required.” My dear friend, if you had any strength, it would be a hindrance to you. It is your weakness that Christ wants, not your strength! “But sir, I am not fit to

come to Christ,” cries another. You are the very man He wants, your fitness would be in the way, it is your unfitness that Christ wants—not your fitness. “Oh, but I have nothing good about me!” You are another man whom Christ wants, your goodness would stand in His way, it is your sin He died to put away, that is what He wants you to believe, so without any goodness, without any fitness, all unholy and vile as you are, I pray you to follow these lines which I will repeat, and see if you can truly say them to Christ from your heart—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”*

Do you say that? Do you also say, “I trust myself wholly to Him, and desire Him to save me from sin, and make me holy. I wish to be His faithful servant and subject as long as I live. Only let Him save me, and I will love Him forever and ever”? If your heart has really said that, you are a saved man, as surely as you live. Sister, if you also said that, go in peace, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven. If you did say that, my son, then be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. Take up your bed and walk, you poor lame soul, this night have you found salvation. Free, full, irreversible, eternal salvation is yours, for you have obeyed the command of the Gospel, which has come, I trust, with power into your heart.

O brother, now be true to Christ! Begin at once to confess Him, and never be backward to own Him as your Lord. If He has saved you, tell it out. It is a shame for any Christian soldier not to wear his regimentals. Christ is such a Lord that He is worth living for, and worth dying for, ay, if our whole lives could be spent amid the fires of martyrdom, Christ deserves that none of us should flinch from such a trial for His dear sake. Be an out-and-out Christian, young man, if you are a Christian at all. God help you so to do, giving your whole self up to Christ to be His forever and ever! So may God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.