

The Warrant of Faith

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In our Sunday morning worship for the past few weeks, we've stopped to linger over a very critical passage in the Gospel of Matthew and the word of God is its own importance, it authenticates its own significance, and so it needs no additional words from me or by way of my example, but the depth of how important the things are at stake, I hope that you will grasp that there is something of magnitude here by the fact that we're spending several weeks on a very short passage of Scripture. It wasn't something that I had scripted months ago, but as we've come to it, I just realized that there are things that I really want to go into depth with you because they go to the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at Matthew 28. We'll start in verse 16 just read the text and then we'll proceed into it. After his resurrection, the word of God records this about the life of our Lord. It says that,

16 ... the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Christ had finished the work of redemption at the cross, he had accomplished what he had come to do, and soon it would be time for him to return to heaven, to ascend back from whence he came, but before he did that, he gave marching orders, as it were, to his disciples. He was telling his church, to these early representatives of us, what it is that we are to do and told us how we were to do it. Now this means that as Christians, this is a passage of just immeasurable depth and consequence to us that we would grasp and understand what it is that we are to do, what it is that we are to say, and how it is that we are to do it, and that's what we are looking at here today.

You know, we gather together, in a sense, we separate out of the world to gather together today and that's how it should be. Jesus at times told his disciples, "Come apart and rest

for a while." We come apart to gather together that we might fellowship, that we might receive instruction from God's word, that we might be strengthened in our faith, but we leave here and we scatter through the world and we have responsibility in the world, and here we have for us what the church is to do. We take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. We tell them that there is a Savior for their sin, that their risk of judgment is great and it is real and yet there is a Savior that can save them from this eternal judgment that they deserve, and we have that message to send, "Christ came, Christ died, Christ resurrected, Christ ascended, in Christ alone is the way of salvation for you."

And what we saw last time when we looked at this is that we are to take this Gospel to everyone. It is a universal appeal that we are to make. Look at verse 19 with me there, it says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." Jesus said to carry the Gospel in Acts 1 to the remotest part of the earth. And I'm talking at this point simply in terms of the command given to the church universal, you know, it's obvious that you and I individually can't fulfill this by ourselves, and so we're talking about what the church is to do, what the message of the church is to be, and that gives us a sense of what we are to say in the individual opportunities that we have. Christ sent us to all the nations, that means that everyone in the world has opportunity and right and privilege to hear this message. Not all of them will be saved, not all of them will believe, but the message is to go to all of them in a free, universal proclamation of Christ that would reach the ears of everyone, that would reach the ears of the Muslim in Africa, the Hindu in India, that would reach the pagan in New York City, that would reach your neighbor across the street from you.

We should not think that anyone is somehow beyond the offer of Christ. We should not think that anyone has sinned too much, or we should not think that any heart is too hard to hear the Gospel and therefore we can safely pass them by. That's not true. We're to go to all of the nations and to understand that everyone is in a position where they should hear this and that we are free to proclaim it to them, that no one has sinned themselves outside of the Gospel of Christ, that they've gone so far that they cannot be presented with the Gospel. That's not for us to say. That's not for us to look at someone deep into the homosexual lifestyle and say, "Well, no, it's not for you. You're too sinful for that." Or to look at the hardened atheistic professor in a university who mocks Christianity and say, "No, you're too far, you've said too much." No, that's not the case. Jesus said to go to all of the nations and to present the Gospel to them, to proclaim Christ to them, and we looked at that in detail last time.

Don't we sing in the hymn, "To God be the glory," haven't you sung with your lips, "The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives." Well, if we sing that and we believe that as we sing it, I'm assuming that we're not hypocrites as we sing that, then the truth of the matter is that there is a willingness and there is an authority given to us to speak this Gospel to everyone and that everyone should have opportunity to hear.

So we've looked at it kind of from an inside perspective in terms of how we as Christians, how are we as the church should think about the Gospel. We should have the perspective

that everyone is our audience. The world, as it were, is our stage from which we proclaim Christ and we do it to everyone freely, indiscriminately, and we let God sort out the consequences of our proclamation. We let the Holy Spirit apply it as he will. I said last time that if we had opportunity to go into the deepest recesses of the super-max prisons in Colorado and elsewhere and speak to the most notorious publicly vilified criminals, if we had that opportunity we would gladly do it because the message of Christ reaches in, the light goes into those deepest corners of darkness, and Christ offers himself to them as well, and we have the privilege of proclaiming that. What more could we want?

Well, today we're pivoting and we're going to ask a different question, we're gonna ask a second question. We said who should we preach the Gospel to? We should preach it to everyone. That's what we should do, and we're not hindered by the doctrine of election from that, I said last time, we're not restricted by that, that doesn't enter into our proclamation in the sense of who hears the Gospel. That's how we think about it. Today we want to consider a different issue, a second issue that you and I need to understand, that the church needs to understand, but it's a little bit of a different perspective. How do they know that the Gospel is for them? How do they know? What assurance do they have that they really can come to Christ for salvation? That's a different question. We understand and say, "Okay, this is my commission. I go and I speak it to everyone, everyone that I get opportunity, everyone that God gives me opportunity to, I speak it. I don't prequalify. I'm not a loan, officer. I don't prequalify people and ask them what their income is or what the morality is. Oh, you're pretty good, let me give you some good news. You others, you're disqualified." No, we're not in the banking industry here. We send this out to everyone but that's different from asking the question how does the sinner, how do you as an unsaved person know that the Gospel is for you? How can a sinner know that he may come to Christ? How do they know that the Gospel is for them? You and I need to understand the answer to that question so that we can help them. The technical question in theological circles, which I'm not going to dwell on here, I mean, I'm explaining the answer to this but I'm not going to dwell on the technical terms, the technical question for those of you familiar with these things that we're addressing today is what is the warrant of faith? By what authority does a sinner say, "I can come to Christ and find salvation"? That's the question that we're asking. On what basis does a sinful man or woman come to Christ and know that he will be received for pardon? By what right, for what reason can you know that Jesus Christ will give forgiveness and eternal life to you? That's the question. How can you know?

Now look, when people are swirling around in the convictions of their conscience and the feelings of guilt and, "Oh, how can I do that?" They are very confused and it's a very difficult thing to believe that there is even forgiveness to be had for you.

Now let me hit a pause button here. I want everybody to relax here today and I feel like I need to say something and explain something so you can do that because I don't want there to be any barriers to your understanding this morning. What we're trying to do here today is to understand the Gospel and the way that the Gospel is offered to sinners. I am not here to make you feel guilty about your lack of evangelism. That has nothing to do with the discussion today, and there is no hook at the end of the message where I'm going

to lay upon you some kind of heavy-handed sense that you need to go out and talk to X, Y and Z today or you're disobedient to Christ. That's not the spirit of this at all so just forget about that. I know that sometimes when we're talking about presenting the Gospel or talking about evangelism, it can be presented that way. Some of us, myself included, we're just not naturally good at that. We have to work at it to get beyond that. That has nothing to do with what we're talking about today so just relax. There's no hook at the end of this message, okay?

What we want to understand is we want to understand how it is that a sinner can know that Christ is for them? And I want to give you a real life example from my past that shows why this is so very important. This question that we're asking today has consequences. It has urgent implications and the way that we understand the answers to these questions shape the way that we interact with people, may even shape the way that you think about, you know, you're here and you know you're not a Christian, to understand how it is that you can know that you can come to Christ. So I want to just give you an illustration. This affected me in ways that I didn't understand back in my youth. You see, back in my youth, I was influenced by the system known as the altar call, and I know that many of you come out of that background. I intend to talk about that in a few weeks maybe. But I was influenced by the altar call system. The impression was created that unless you stepped forward and came to the front while we all sing gently, "Just as I am," with every eye closed and every head bowed, you come forward, you know how that goes. I was under the impression and it was communicated, the sense was given that unless you did that you could not be saved. It was a barrier to coming to Christ. We'll talk about that another time but the preaching that I was hearing and the things that were being told to me, I was troubled deeply in my heart about what it meant to respond to Christ. I did not understand. I was looking for answers, what should I do? And, you know, and there's this kind of this murky sense that something is wrong with me, somehow Christ is the answer but I didn't know how to get from my confusion into the light, you could say. True story. I had kind of forgotten about this until I started studying these things and thinking about them and I said, "Oh, man, this is what happened to me." Maybe it will help you.

In the midst of that time, that episode in my life, someone asked me a question. It was loaded with significance, far more significance than either of us understood at the time. I was asked this question, "Do you feel like God is calling you? Do you feel like God is calling you?" That was a sincere question, well intended. They were trying to help me but that question didn't clarify anything for me. That made my confusion worse. Frankly, it exasperated me in my mental and spiritual difficulty. What can I say to that question except what I did say, "I don't know! Here's the whole problem, I don't know God! How am I supposed to know if he's speaking to me? He's a stranger to me. How do I know the voice of God if I don't know God first?" I didn't say it all like that. The seeds of my subsequent animation in the pulpit were perhaps planted there for the first time. "Do you feel like God is speaking to you?" "Good grief, isn't that the problem? I don't know him. How could I possibly know if he's speaking to me?"

Well, and this is a conversation that took place within the span of two minutes at the most. The reply was significant as well. Loaded with significance. Loaded with eternal implications. And the answer when I said, "I don't know if God is speaking to me," the answer that came back to me was this, "Well, then he's probably not." Because my feelings inside my heart were not clear to me, because as a young person I didn't have the vocabulary, the understanding to articulate what was going on in my mind, I was basically told to forget about it and drop the subject. "There's nothing here for you if you don't know your feelings."

Now beloved, let's come back to today and think about what happened there. This is about so much more than my personal experience. I just think it's a helpful useful illustration to show why this is so important. I don't care about the old Don Green today, I'm just trying to help you and I think this is a helpful way to approach it and understand the significance of what we're talking about. Think about, think with me, brothers and sisters, think about me, boys and girls, think with me about what happened there. Somehow something about Christ was swirling around in my mind but I was told that I was not being called by God, let me drop the passive voice, I was told that God was not calling me unless I felt it inside, unless I felt something inside, he wasn't calling me. Now it is critical, it's critical for you and I to understand today why that response is profoundly mistaken. That is not what you tell somebody in a conversation about the Gospel and you must understand why.

Think about it this way with me. Where does teaching like that tell people to look? It tells them to look inside, right? It says you have to think about, you've got to look, you've got to ask questions about what's in your heart to understand whether the Gospel is for you or not. Now that's wrong on multiple levels but, beloved, what does Jeremiah 17:9 say about the heart? It says the heart is deceitful, desperately wicked, who can understand it? To tell a sinner to look in his heart for the call of God could not be more profoundly misdirected. That's wrong. That is not what we direct people to to understand the Gospel because the message is this, and you know, people who say this may not realize what they're doing, I'm sure that many of them don't, but what's being communicated in a setting like that is this: you go and find something in your heart and then you can come to Christ, but you've got to find it in your heart first. You've got to feel something inside first. Now with that said, my friends, if you can know why that is wrong, you will be far more useful to Christ in evangelism. If you can understand why that is wrong, you will be in a far better stronger position to help people who are struggling spiritually. In this enveloping darkness in which we live, the light that you have to give will shine more brightly if you can see these things clearly, and that's what we want to do today using as our foundation this passage in Matthew that I read earlier, Matthew 28:18.

So with those things in mind, let's consider our text again. Look at it with me again. We kind of reset it in our minds. "Jesus," verse 18, "came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Beloved, I'll just give you a summary here and then we'll

unpack it as we go along. The warrant of faith, the reason that sinners can know that they can come to Christ is premised not in what they think or feel inside themselves, it is external to them. It is rooted in the command of Christ. Christ commands this regardless of how someone feels about it, regardless of what someone thinks inside. The call of Christ, the command of Christ is independent of how we think about it and it goes universally to everyone.

Let's see how this plays out. What is the basis upon which you as a sinner can know that Christ wants you to come? It's because he commands you to come regardless of how you feel about it. What is the basis upon which you can come to Christ, we'll see a little bit later? It's because he promises to receive you if he does. You see, what gives us assurance that Christ will receive us has nothing to do with what's in your heart, it has everything to do with what Christ has commanded and what he has promised and that changes everything about the way that we interact with unsaved people about the Gospel.

Let's look, first of all, at the command of Christ. The command of Christ. Jesus said, that's our first point for today if you're taking notes, it's the command of Christ. What is the warrant of faith? On what basis can sinners know that they can come to Jesus? It's on the command of Christ, first of all. Jesus said, verse 18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go and make disciples. Teach them all that I commanded you." Everything about this is premised on who he is and what he said to do.

Now, the word "authority," we need to think about that for a moment, the word "authority" refers to someone having the right and the ability to impose their will on something, the right and ability to enforce their will, to call, to command obedience, and Jesus Christ has authority over everyone because he has authority over everything, and his ministry as described in the Gospel of Matthew established that beyond any means of contesting it. We won't look at all of these passages, perhaps we should, but just for the sake of time we won't. In Matthew, you see so many displays of Jesus' authority in different realms. Let me just give you six in a very quick laundry list sort of thing.

Jesus manifested his authority in his teaching. In Matthew 7:28, the crowd said, "This is new teaching with authority." There was a compulsory tone to what he said that it was obvious that he was distinct from any other teacher that they had ever heard. His words carried authority which is not surprising because when God speaks, he speaks with authority, right? He had authority in his teaching.

He had authority over human disease. He goes to Peter's mother-in-law and he heals her. He raises her up and he manifested that he has a power over the human condition, over the human body. You know, he healed the sick. He cast out demons. He raised the dead when he raised Lazarus. He has authority over human disease so that when he speaks the word, someone is healed. That's authority. You and I can't do that and we know we can't do that. I can't speak and heal your broken bones or your defective heart, meaning your literal beating organ. Can't reverse old age for you. Can't make your gray hair black again. I can't do any of that. I don't have that authority. Christ does.

Christ has authority over demons. He could see a demon-possessed man and say, "Come out from him," and the demons obeyed. They did what he said because he has authority. He has the ability and the right to enforce his will upon everything that is the object of his volition.

He has authority over nature. You remember this, right? He's asleep in the boat, big storm comes up, they are being tossed around by hurricane gales, his disciples are in a state of panic, "Lord, wake up! We're perishing!" He shakes off his slumber, looks at the sea and says, "Stop. Be still." And by his spoken word the hurricane becomes a sea of glass instantly. Power over nature.

He has the authority to forgive sins. He has authority to raise the dead. All of these things in Matthew 7, 8 and 9.

So think about it with me. I'll just rehearse this real quick. Authority in his teaching, authority over human disease, authority over demons, authority over nature, authority to forgive sins, authority to raise the dead, in every visible and invisible realm, the human realm, the spiritual realm, life and death, whatever pairings, binary pairings you want to join together, Jesus demonstrated that he had authority over it all. All of those realms responded to his command. He has absolute right over creation and his word shall be obeyed. Nothing contradicts it.

So when he says in verse 20 that we are to go out and to teach the nations to observe all that he commanded us, the significance of that is this: by virtue of the orders of Jesus Christ our Lord, we tell others to come to him. It's a derivative authority that we have but Christ commanded us and we are to speak in a way that helps people to understand that Christ is commending you to come to him. The Gospel is a message that is based on the command of Jesus Christ. This is authority.

Now understand, my friends, understand that Jesus isn't suggesting that they come, he's not begging them as if he was at the mercy of what they wanted to do, he's not offering one option among others, he says, "Well, you know, I know that there's teaching over here and teaching over here and, you know, here's one way, you can come to God through Me if you want." No, he didn't say it that way. He said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." He asserts unilateral, absolute, comprehensive authority over who will or who will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And so he's not offering an option, he is giving orders for people to come. As you sit here today under the preaching of God's word, you're here and you're not a Christian, I want you to understand that Christ is commanding you to come to him for salvation no matter how you feel or what you think about it. It is independent of that. It is over you. It is beyond you. He is speaking into your life and asserting authority over what you are to do with your heart. You are to come to him. Jesus expressed his message in the imperative mood, to use a language term. He gave imperatives. He told Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4, "Follow Me." He told Philip in John 1:43, "Follow Me." He told the weary and heavy-laden in Matthew 11:20, "Come to Me." He speaks in the language of command. The Apostle John put it this way in his first letter toward the end of the New Testament, he said, "This is His

commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Now that has massive implications. This takes it out of the realm of the confusion of a young boy, takes it out of the realm even of the rebellion of a young adult, it takes it out of the realm of what an old person thinks about himself in light of a life that he's wasted. Christ commands you to come.

Now we're not taking time to emphasize this today but it's a command of love. We've made that point in the past. It's in love that he commands us. It's in desire for our blessing that he commands us to come, but what I want you to see here today, my friends, is that the authority of Jesus Christ supersedes and overrules anything that the sinner thinks about himself. You are to look to Christ, hear the command, and obey it and come to him for your salvation. That commandment answers all the evasions that sinners would offer in their own heart or in the way that they might respond to you and say, "I'm not interested." That has nothing to do with it. Christ commands you to come. You say, "I believe in another god. I'm a Mormon. I'm a Catholic. I don't believe your way. I'm a Jehovah's Witness. That's your opinion." I've heard them say that. That doesn't matter. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father, coequal with the Holy Spirit, commands you by his authority to come. He commands you to come. It doesn't matter what you've believed until now, you are being confronted with the highest authority in the universe and commanded by him, told by him, ordered by him to come to him. Someone might say, maybe the blood of their own infant on their hands in this awful world in which we live, "My past is too dark. I'm too sinful. I've done too much. I can't forgive myself." You say, "My friend, you don't understand, Christ commands you to come, and his command overrules what you think about yourself." Don't look inside. Don't make self-assessments about your own life and say, "Well, then I must not qualify." Just look at the clear command of Christ and realize that he commands you to come.

That is your warrant for faith. That is the basis upon which you can come to him. You see, you don't have to say, "But I'm too guilty." That's not the point. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners just like you and now he commands you to come, all of this in the context of teaching that takes place over time, but what I want you to see, beloved, is this, and I just, you know, this is another one of those times where I'm just mindful of pleading with the Holy Spirit to help you understand because human words are so weak. Christ commands sinners to come to him and that is the reason that they are to come. You respond to authority. Most of us when the police officer turns the lights on behind us, we say, "Uh-oh, an authority is telling me what to do. I will comply. I will obey." Well, in a far greater, infinitely more significant and higher authority, Christ comes and calls and says, "It's time for you to pull your life over and submit to Me, to come to Me." It's on that authority that Christ comes and gives you the reason, the warrant, the basis upon which you can come to him. "Oh, Christ, you know, there's nothing here good about me. I get that, I have nothing to offer You," as the hymn writer said, "Nothing in my hand I bring." "But Christ, Christ, all I can tell You is You've commanded me to come and so here I am. I come and I bow before You simply because You've commanded me to do so." That's all the reason that you need to come to Christ.

And so to complete the story, to rewrite history in that little two minute episode I told you about when I was a young person, they never should have asked me, "Do you feel like God is calling you?" That was not the right question. That's okay. They meant well. They meant well. They were concerned for me. They meant well. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. But when I said, "I don't know if He is or not," the answer, biblically informed answer would have been, "But let me tell you, He is calling you. He commands you to come. He says, 'Follow Me. Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy-laden.' You don't have to sort it out what you feel inside, I'm telling you based on Scripture that Christ commands you to, and so you are free to come to him right now without having to sort out your feelings first. You can come to Christ because He commands you to come." That's a whole different conversation. Do you see that? Do you see that that's a completely different conversation, takes it out of the realm of the subjective and places it in an objective realm where the word of Christ can be seen clearly in his word? And said, "See, right there, He's commanding you," and all of a sudden all of the fog is blown away replaced with a clarity based on the wonderful inerrant word of God. "I can assure you Christ is calling you because He commands all men to come, all the nations. You live in one of the nations, don't you? It's for you."

Now secondly, there is another warrant for faith that goes beyond the command of Christ, or you could say is in addition to the commands of Christ, and this is very very sweet. It's the promise of Christ. It's the promise of Christ. My friend, you have a basis upon which to come to Christ based on his promise.

Now let me preface this with just a little bit of explanation, I guess. Jesus Christ is the eternal God in human flesh. As God, he is the God of truth and the Bible says that he cannot lie. There are some things that God cannot do and one of the things that God cannot do, he cannot lie. Every word that he speaks is true, it is reliable. He will never violate what he has said and that's really crucial here as I speak to you about Christ and as I call you to Christ because that means something, it means this, it means that you can find basis to come to Christ, you have a warrant, you have permission, you could say you have an authority to believe in Christ not only on what he commanded but on his promise.

Look at Matthew 11. Let's turn there. You see the language of command and the language of promise side-by-side in this famous call of Christ, this language of command and this language of promise as you turn to Matthew 11. Look at that text with me, Matthew 11:28. Language of command, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden," language of promise, "I will give you rest." Language of command, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me," language of command, "for I am gentle and humble in heart," language of promise, "You will find rest for your souls." Oh, the sweetness of that, the sweetness of that.

Look also at the Gospel of John 6 with me, John 6:35, and this is just filled with promise upon promise, and in our day and age, promises are kind of losing their value, aren't they? We're used to politicians promising everything and not fulfilling it. Some of us have the sad human experience of people promising to do one thing and not doing it.

Some of you have had families broken because promises were not kept, but that's why it's so important to remember who these promises are coming from. These are promises coming from an earnest God who cannot lie, who commits himself and stakes his very word and in one sense the very reality of his essence on the nature of his promise because if he broke a promise, that would be a lie, he would no longer be the God of truth and God would have changed. God can't change. He's immutable. So God, the God of truth comes and says, "I promise you this," which means that these are promises that cannot be broken; these things have to take place for the veracity of God himself to be upheld.

So in John 6:35, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.'" Promise. Promise. "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me," promise, "I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him," language of promise, "will have eternal life, and I Myself," promise, "I promise you that I will raise you up on the last day." Beloved, we are under the Yosemite Falls of wonderful promise flowing down from heaven upon sinners right here, a promise from God that says if you come to Christ, he will receive you. It doesn't matter how bad you've been. It's independent of how you feel about things in your heart. You simply look outside of yourself to the written text of the written word of God and see what Christ says and you see that there is an unbreakable promise to you that says, "If you will come to Me, I'll give you eternal life. I'll forgive all of your sins," Jesus says, "I will raise you up on the last day." And in the overflow of that promise and the stream that flows after that waterfall has come down upon you, in the stream that flows, you ride along in an ark of safety, an ark that cleanses your conscience, that assures you of the love of God, that leaves you without any fear of final judgment, without any final fear of rejection because you have come to Christ on his terms and on his terms he says, "If you come to Me, I won't cast you out. If you come to Me, I'll raise you up on the last day. If you come to Me, you'll have eternal life." Complete, thorough, immediate, instantaneous, eternal forgiveness and acceptance with a righteous God, and you see something of the gracious nature of God revealed in promises like this. So when the Son of God who cannot lie says, "I'll never cast you out," you have his personal assurance, his personal word that he will receive you.

Now beloved, here's what I want you to see. I think this is just, I think this is magnificent. I think these themes are the highest thing that any human tongue can ever speak of and that any human ear could ever hear. Anything else pales in comparison to this. To sinners like you, Jesus Christ says, "You come to Me." It's a command of authority, but it's more than that. It's not just that. It's a promise of love. It's a promise of love that says, "In your sinful condition, I promise you that if you come to Me, I will save you. I will redeem you. I will forgive you." And my unsaved friend, it's my privilege and prerogative here today to tell you that Jesus Christ came to save sinners just like you. The Apostle Paul said, "I'm the chief of sinners and He came to save me. I'm saved by Him." Beloved, if he saved the chief, he'll save all the Indians underneath him.

Christ when we looked at this in John 20 a while back, Thomas said, "Unless I see the wounds of His hands, the whole in his side, I won't believe." Christ came and said, "Here they are. Here are My hands, Thomas, put your fingers in the holes in My hand. It's Me. It's real." And in no lesser sense, in fact in a way verified to you today, certified to you by the work of the Holy Spirit, you have those same wounded hands, figuratively speaking, set before you saying, "Here are the hands that paid the price for your redemption. Here are the hands that did the work. See here through the eyes of believing faith and what is revealed in the word, see here the hands and see that these hands welcome you too." And my unsaved friend, I want to tell you, I want to tell you that those hands that once dripped with blood, those hands that once were seared with human pain from the spikes on the beams of the cross, those hands come to you now, they're not dripping with blood, they're dripping with mercy, with grace, with kindness, and the fingers beckon you, "Come, come to Me," Christ says, "Follow Me. I will have you. I promise you I will never cast you away."

The sinless Son of God bore the punishment for sinful men and women at the cross of Calvary, suffered in the place of men and women, boys and girls just like you. He took the wrath so that he could offer eternal life to you and, my unsaved friend, you young people that have grown up in Christian families, I'm not speaking to you with the tone of authority that sometimes I use when I speak to you, I speak to you in the language of love, in the spirit of invitation, of welcome. You should obey the command that Christ gives you to come to him. You should. His authority requires it. You must. To refuse, to reject is unthinkable. It's disobedience. It's sinful to refuse the command to come to Christ for salvation and so you should obey it. But this sense that you must obey is accompanied by the fact that in your own self-interest you should obey the command to come to him because he promises to bless you if you do. Do you realize, my unsaved friends, do you realize, my Christian brothers and sisters in Christ, how free, how unconditional the offer that Christ makes to sinners is? Everyone is invited to come. There are no preconditions. There are no disqualifications from the offer. There is an immediacy of love and authority mingled together that says, "You come to Me and I'll save your soul."

He promises to bless you if you repent and believe. That has implications. The majesty of grace is overwhelming. It means this, it means that you don't have to try to make yourself better first. Christ isn't saying, "Go and clean yourself up, go wash up and then come to Me." He's saying, "You come to Me, come to Me as a sinner, come to Me as one undeserved, come to Me even if it's not all clear in your mind." Friend, look, look, none of us understand the fullness of the majesty of Christ and the majesty of grace when we first come to him. You just listen to his command, hear his promise and come. Don't try to make yourself better first because you lack power for that. Don't wait for right feelings as if, "Okay, now I feel like I can come." No, don't do that. If you wait for right feelings, you'll never come. If you say, "But I'm not sure," and there are people like this, I can't tell you how often I have conversations just like this, who say, "You know, I'm not sure that I'm sorry enough for my sin. I don't know if I'm repentant enough to come." That's just looking inside, it's looking inside for some kind of prequalification, right? Now listen,

I've got news for you. You say, "I'm not sure that I feel sorry enough for my sins." Let me tell you, you don't. You're not sorry enough because you don't realize the magnitude of your guilt and offense against God. You can never understand. You could never be sorry enough. That's not a qualification to come. The qualification, what entitles you to come to Christ with an expectation that he will accept you is, "Jesus, You commanded. I'm here. Jesus, You promised. I'm here." So don't try to make yourself better, don't try to stop sinning, come to Christ as a guilty unworthy sinner and he'll accept you just like that.

Charles Spurgeon said this and I quote, he said, "You are certainly guilty whether you feel it or not. You are far more guilty than you know. Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you feel your guilt. Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need." The Bible declares you guilty. "Lord, I don't get all of it but I'll take You at Your word. Okay, I'm guilty. Christ is a Savior who commands me and promises me to bless me if I come. Lord, here I am." It's that clear upon which you can come to Christ.

And for you Christian friends, this tells us where to point our friends and our loved ones, our coworkers. You declare to them things that are true, you tell them, "You're guilty of breaking God's law, but God's provided a Savior, He's provided a way for sinners to be reconciled to Him." You show them the command and the promise of Christ. Take them to Matthew 11, command and promise, command and promise, it's all right there, and then you tell them that they have the right and the responsibility to come to Christ for salvation and they see the issue plainly. It's not about what you believe, in one sense it's not about what they believe even, this is about Christ commanding authority over their soul. And then as you do that, you ask God to do a work in their hearts that only he can do and we'll trust him for what comes of it. He commands you to come. He promises to receive you if you will.

Let's pray together.

As You have promised, O Lord, as You promised to Your disciples, make us fishers of men. Holy Spirit, we pray for Your work in unbelieving hearts that they could understand and believe the things that have been spoken to them. We pray for that regenerating work in the midst of their dead souls so that they would rise, go to Christ and receive eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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