

The Moral Law and Christian Obedience

The Ten Commandments

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Today we are going to consider "The Moral Law and Christian Obedience." The moral law and Christian obedience, that's the title for today's message. The very nature of biblical salvation is that you cannot save yourself. Man does not have the capacity to save himself, he cannot be good enough to earn God's favor, he is a sinner separated from God. Scripture says in John 3 that men actually prefer darkness to light, that they cannot obey God's word because they don't even want to, as it says in Romans 8. Man has broken God's law. He falls short of God's glory and the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is this, it's that Christ has come and he has helped us. He has done a work on our behalf that we might be reconciled despite our guilt and unworthiness.

Jesus Christ in his perfect sinless life when he walked the face of the earth for some three decades, he perfectly obeyed the law of God and he did it on behalf of his people. Jesus Christ perfectly paid the penalty and absorbed the wrath of God that was rightly against sinners when he shed his blood for us on the cross. Christ was acting as a representative, as a substitute for those who would believe in him. His obedience fulfills the requirements of the law of God and for those who believe in him, he graciously shares that merit with them so that we approach God not in our merit, not on anything good that we have done, but exclusively trusting in the merit of Christ as being the point of access to a holy God. And along with that, the fact that Christ shed his blood is the only possible thing that can wash away your sins. If you are not in Christ today, you have sin that clings to you, you have sin in your account. There is an infinite debt that you owe to your creditor, so to speak, speaking metaphorically, the most holy God, you have sin and you have a debt that you cannot pay and the good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin, he has paid the debt that our transgressions have created on our account, and he paid it when he shed his blood at the cross. Scriptures say that the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

So we can come to God through Christ, it's the only way that we can come. We come with humble broken hearts. We come trusting not in ourselves but looking outside of ourselves, not to our obedience but to the perfections of Christ, the perfect shed blood that he has spilled on our behalf and we approach God in that way and in that way alone so that, as I've said sometimes in the past, to meaningfully say that you are a Christian is to make a profound statement about yourself and about Christ. For someone to truly say

that they're a Christian is to make an open confession that, "I am in my own self, I'm a sinner who deserves the judgment of God and I believe that Christ intervened on my behalf, He paid what was necessary for me to be reconciled with God, and I trust nothing of my own self, nothing of my own works. My trust is entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him alone for my reconciliation with God, and if it were not for Christ, I would be destined to rightly perish miserably for all of my eternity." That's what a confession of Christ means. As one writer said, you know, "On a life I did not live, on a death I did not die. Another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity." That's the sense in which we trust in Christ.

So those who repent and believe in Christ receive this perfect gift, this perfect standing with God as a free gift of undeserved grace. God accepts us in Christ, not on the basis of anything that we have done which leads us to a question that is profoundly significant for a study of the 10 Commandments. We'll deal with it some today, we'll deal with it more in a few weeks. If all of that is true, and it is, if all of that is true, then why are we concerning ourselves with a study of the moral law of God which is summarized in the 10 Commandments? Why does this matter if the law has been fulfilled on our behalf, if the penalty that the law requires has been satisfied by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, then why concern ourselves with such an extended passage and over such an extended period of time, why concern ourselves with something that you say has been satisfied in Christ? Well, like I say, we're going to address this more in the future but for today we want to look at it from the eyes of Jesus, look at it through the teaching of Jesus who showed us in his exposition of the law that the law still has a role to play in the life of his disciples. And with that thought in mind, I invite you to turn to Matthew 5:17. Matthew 5, beginning in verse 17, which will kind of work as our foundational text here this morning.

Matthew 5:17 through 20. Jesus Christ immediately corrects any false notions about the purpose of his coming, of his life, death and resurrection, and he tells us this in verse 17. He says, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Now what we are entering into to discuss today is perhaps the most difficult issue in all of theology. Phil Johnson says that it is the most difficult issue in all of theology, understanding how the relationship of the law applies to the church, to Christians, and in the age of grace. And let me just summarize this for you for now and understanding we're going to come back to it, you know, in a few weeks: even though the law has been fulfilled on our behalf in Christ, its requirements have been met on our behalf in Christ, its penalty has been paid on our behalf in Christ, the moral law still has authority in our Christian lives even though our obedience is not the ground upon which God accepts us. Let me say that again: the moral law still has authority in Christian living, it is not the

ground upon which God accepts us because God accepts us in Christ, but there is still a role for the moral law to play and it still has authority in our lives. Think about it this way. The moral law summarized in the 10 Commandments, it does something additional that is often forgotten when these matters are discussed. The moral law is a revelation of the will of God. It is a revelation that manifests his own holy character. It shows us what God desires and what it is that pleases him so that as we understand the moral law in its depths and in its breadth, we have before us an understanding of how it is that we approach life in a way that pleases God. Too often when the 10 Commandments are ignored consistently over time in an individual Christian life or in a Christian pulpit, the result, I fear, is this, is that we are left to, people began to think that it's just their own sentimental notion about loving God or what their sentimental subjective notion of what the will of God is, that they rely upon to guide them in life and in how they live, and God did not intend it to be such a subjective variable approach. He gave us the moral law so that we could see what pleases him.

We do not, I'll have to say this a dozen times because I know that there will be people in other places just dying to jump on and to misrepresent my teaching on this which is just consistent with Reformed teaching, what I'm teaching you is consistent with what the best Reformed theologians have taught since the days of Luther. The moral law for the Christian does this, it shows us the will of God so that we can please him with the way that we live, it guides us, in other words. It also does something else, it shows us the remaining pollution of our nature, the remaining sin that is in our lives. It humbles us by showing that even as believers there are just countless ways that we fall short of the glory of God, so that it teaches us humility as we see the remnants of sin in our nature, and at the same time it gives us lofty aspirations as we see how God is holy and this is how he wants his people to respond to his holiness, as it says in the second table that it gives specific direction on how we are to love our neighbors. This is not left to our sentiment. This is not left to an emotional approach to life. There is objective structure that gives us a sense of direction for every aspect of our life and the 10 Commandments reveal that to us in a way that is undeniable when they are properly understood and properly applied. It takes time to soak it in. That's why we're going to take our time with it, looking for the time a few months from now where we have considered all of these things carefully and then we have the opportunity to start to move forward and to think about them in a right and proper way.

Scripture goes so far as to say this, that obedient Christian lives are a part of the way that God's law is fulfilled. Turn to the book of Romans 8. In verse 1, you see a summary of everything that I've said by way of my introduction. The result of salvation for those who have repented and put their faith in Christ alone is this, Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are free from the terror of the law because Christ has fulfilled it on our behalf. There is no need for us to be afraid of eternal judgment, no need to fear the place that doesn't exist that some call purgatory, there's no need to fear that because Christ has satisfied everything that God requires on our behalf. And yet as we continue on in our Christian lives, what salvation has done, it has freed us from guilt, it has freed us from condemnation, but now through the

indwelling power of the Holy Spirit God has equipped us so that we can actually respond in loving obedience to what he has required in his law.

Verses 2 through 4, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." You are freed from the power of sin, you're freed from the penalty of sin. Verse 3, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh," okay, "so that," purpose clause, "so that," expressing what follows after genuine salvation, of true conversion, what follows after true conversion, verse 4, "so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." In other words, as the Spirit of God works in your heart over time, your life grows in its obedience to the law, not because you're trying to earn God's favor through your obedience but it is the natural response of a child seeking to please his parents with obedience to what they require. That's what love is expressed in obedience as we're going to see but as we go through our time here this morning, Spirit-empowered obedience to the moral law of God flows from true salvation.

J. C. Ryle guides us in our thinking about the moral law when he says this in his reflections on the gospel of Matthew. He said this and I quote, "Let us not suppose for a moment that the law is set aside by the gospel or that Christians have nothing to do with it. Christ refers His people to the moral law as their guide for holy living. It cannot save us but let us never despise it." As Christ goes on from this statement that we read in Matthew 5, he goes on and he expositis what the law means to his disciples. Well, that's us. Those who have believed in Christ are his disciples. Christ's word is our law. Christ's word is authoritative to us. And what did he teach us when he said, "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it"? Well, in the rest of chapter 5 he takes different statements from the law and explains their significance for his disciples. He obviously saw the moral law as having effect and authority in the lives of his disciples, and so we do not agree with those who say that the 10 Commandments have been set aside for believers in Christ, we're just careful to define the purpose that they actually have as we've tried to do here this morning.

So what are we going to do this morning? I'm going to do this, I'm not going to give you six reasons that true Christians obey the moral law. Not perfectly, we do not obey perfectly in this life. We don't obey in order to gain God's favor. Our favor is found in Christ but the way that we respond to the loving salvation that Christ has given to us is expressed in obedience. Blessing awaits you if you heed the things that we are about to hear from God's word, and a clarity of understanding in what the Scriptures mean in your life is found in what we're about to look at. It's all very practical and so let's just go through these six reasons very quickly. What are the factors, what are the influences that the Spirit of God uses to produce obedience in your life? Why is it that a true Christian cannot be indifferent to sanctification, why it is that he cannot be indifferent to being conformed to the image of Christ, why are those things true and necessary results of genuine conversion. Six reasons and we'll go through them quickly.

The first one starting with the cornerstone of God's character is this, is that God is holy. God is holy. Scripture calls you to a holy life because of the nature of the character of God. Look, first of all, at 1 Peter 1 just after the book of Hebrews and James for those of you that have a hard copy of the Bible in front of you. 1 Peter 1:14. Peter is speaking to Christians here. He is not engaging in evangelism to the unconverted. He is speaking to those who are true children of God and he is instructing them on how to live in the midst of a hostile world. And he says this in chapter 1, verse 14, he says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

If you want to look at another passage, turn over to 1 John just a couple of books to the right as you're turning to the back of your Bible. 1 John 1:5, John again writing to true Christians emphasizing throughout this book the importance of obedience as being a mark of genuine salvation, he says in chapter 1, verse 5, it's the exact same premise simply using the word "Light" instead of "holiness." "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light," in other words, God is holy, God is true, and because that's true of God, "in Him there is no darkness at all." Therefore, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him," this God who is Light, if we say we have fellowship with this God who is Light, "and yet walk in the darkness," we walk in a life patterned in sin and disobedience, then "we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." The point of this passage in 1 Peter and here in 1 John and, you know, you can go through the rest of 1 John and see this emphasis again and again, is that God is holy and God's moral law expresses his holiness. It is a manifestation, it is a revelation of his holiness and the implications that it has for men. How we are to love God, how we are to love our neighbor, it is founded there in the moral law expressed in the 10 Commandments. So being in Christ does not set the moral law aside, empowers us to keep it. It empowers us to recognize its authority and to seek to have our lives conformed to it as the Spirit of God works within us. The point in what we're saying here is this, is that this is inevitable. It could be no other way.

My friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if a holy God has genuinely saved you and genuinely made you one of his children and brought you into his family, then understand this, that he gave birth to you, he gave spiritual birth to you in order that you might be conformed to the family likeness, that you might just as children show the physical traits of their biological parents, that you would show forth the spiritual characteristic of the God who gave birth to you. You were born again. You were born from above. The God who gave birth to you is a God who is holy and therefore it is obvious that there will be a principle of holiness that is at work in the lives of those who are truly saved. It could be no other way. How is it possible, I ask you, how is it possible that someone could have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them and live a life of indifference to obedience to God, live a life of utter rebellion against him and still be in Christ? That does not compute. That does not make sense. That is not biblical. That is not true salvation because true salvation is found when a holy God gives birth to new life to one who was previously

walking in darkness, and as a result of that, holiness will be the mark of those who truly believe. There will be a growth in holiness.

So the reason that we concern ourselves with the moral law of God is because God is holy and that expresses itself in Christian life. Secondly, not only that God is holy but there is a second reason that this is a necessary consequence, it's this, it's that God planned for your obedience. God planned for your obedience, and when we say he planned it, what we mean is that obedient Christian living is rooted in the eternal counsel of God. It is rooted in his eternal purpose established before time began. This is the nature of the eternal purpose of God is your obedience, as we will see immediately here. Beloved, one of the reasons God saved you was to change your heart from loving sin toward loving holiness, toward going from hating the holiness of God and loving it and pursuing it. In Matthew 5:6 Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they," and they alone, "shall be satisfied." This desire for holiness is a distinguishing mark of the ones who are truly redeemed. Blessed are those, the favor of God rests upon those who have this desire in their heart like an unquenchable or recurring physical desire of hunger and thirst, in the spiritual realm, there is this recurring desire for sanctification, for holiness, for righteous living that has separated itself, in principle, from the prior manner of life, saying, "This is what I want. I want to honor God with my life. I want to obey Him whether anybody sees it or not." And what Scripture says is that God preordained those good works of your Christian life so that you would walk in them.

Look at the book of Ephesians 2. In one sense, I speak in hyperbole, within the realm of the church, everybody knows Ephesians 2:8 and 9. Somehow we too often stop there and don't read verse 10. Verses 8 and 9, repeating my introduction, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Keep reading, my friends. Verse 10, "For we are His workmanship," flowing out of verses 8 and 9 is this conclusion that the apostle gives as he gives the inspired word of God. He says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works," under this purpose of good works. You're not created in Christ by good works, you're created for them, in order that that might be the expression of your Christian life now that you are in Christ. You're created in Christ Jesus for good works, "which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." God prepared your life in advance. God when he saved you had set in course and had prepared a life for you to live whether in richness or in poverty, whether in strength or in weakness, whether in prosperity or whatever it may be, God prepared in advance a life for you to live and this life that he has given you to live is to be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, showing forth obedience and living life to his glory as the providence that he has established for you unfolds day by day, and that is the purpose for which you live as a Christian. So that, look at verse 10 with me again, God prepared these good works beforehand so that we would walk in them. God planned for you to live an obedient Christian life. This is the nature of salvation.

Elsewhere in Scripture, it says in Titus 2:14, it says Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." In other words, Christ saved you in order to make

you a particular kind of person, that in your heart there would be a zeal and a desire to honor him and to obey him with your life. He did not save you in order for you to just go out and live any way that you wanted to. He saved you so that you would be a kind of person that was zealous for obedience. A desire to obey marks out those who are truly redeemed and it separates the wheat from the chaff, it separates the men from the boys, it separates the contenders from the pretenders. I'm just using different things here. Those who genuinely possess eternal life and those who only affirm it with their lips without thought reality in their hearts, obedience is the distinguishing mark that helps us recognize the real thing so that Sinclair Ferguson could say, "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, then God's law has been written in our hearts and we obey it joyfully."

Friends, I ask you: is there something in your heart at the core of who you are that says, "I want my life to be unto the glory of God. The goal of my life is not worldly success, the goal of my life is to be found an obedient child of my heavenly Father." Is that the desire of your heart? If recognizing that we all stumble in many ways but there is this unquenchable desire that never seems to quite go out that says in your heart, "I want to be a child that is pleasing to My Father," that's the mark of true salvation. If that desire is not in your heart, then you are not a Christian no matter what else you say, no matter who your parents are, no matter how many times you come to church or anything else. There is a real internal spiritual dynamic that takes place in the heart of the redeemed and that is inevitable because God planned for all Christians, he planned a life for them in which they could glorify him. In the life that God has given to you, he has established a means by which you can express your obedience to him and somewhere in the nerve center of your spiritual heart is this desire to honor him, and that honor and obedience is expressed in responding to the way that God has made his morality, his moral law known in the 10 Commandments.

So God is holy, God planned for your obedience, thirdly, obedience deepens your assurance. Obedience deepens your assurance and let me be careful to explain and define things here. The first question when you are struggling with assurance of salvation, the first question should always be this: do you believe in Christ? Do you believe in Christ? Do you look outside of yourselves and see in Christ a perfect Savior without whom you cannot be saved? Do you look at Christ and say, "Yes, I believe what Scripture says about Him, that He is the eternal Son of God, He came to seek and to save the lost. I believe that He died on the cross to save His people from their sins," Matthew 1:21. "I believe that and I trust in that even though I stumble and fall short." That's always the first question, you look outside of yourselves and you say do you believe the gospel or not. You start there but as you proceed, you understand that true faith produces works of obedience and so you either can deepen your assurance by pursuing obedience, or you diminish obedience and cloud it by persisting in sin.

In 1 John 2:3, you don't need to turn there, the apostle said, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." In James 2:8 it says someone

may well say, "You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works." So the issue of whether your faith is real or not, one of the tests of that is the test of moral obedience to a holy God and a willingness to confess and repent when it's been shown to you that you fall short.

I ask you, my friends, whether your life, whether your faith can be known by your works or not because Scripture tells us to think in those kinds of categories, and if there is a pattern, a desire, a manifest change in life, then you have reason to believe as you look to the gospel, as you trust in Christ, you say, "Do you know what? My life is consistent with what Scripture says it will be. I desire to put sin aside and to live in obedience." Even though I fall short and we all do, I keep repeating myself that so I won't be misunderstood, even though we fall short, there is this enduring desire of obedience that is the mark of the truly redeemed. And so we can't avoid the question, if we care anything about the nature of our eternal souls, we can't avoid the question of saying, "Is there something in my heart like that?"

Fourthly, why is obedience a necessary mark of true conversion? Fourthly, we obey in love for Christ. We obey in love for Christ. Look, remember the way that we framed things here at the start, okay? We spoke extensively about Christ, his perfect life, his perfect death, our substitute, our representative, our advocate in heaven, our King who is going to return and receive us to himself, we see in Christ the loveliness of his perfectly holy life, his perfect humility, his humble obedience to his Father, we see him showing forth during his earthly life this incredible compassion on sinners, those who needed healing, those who felt conviction like Zacchaeus and wanted to be free from sin and Christ received them, blessed them, we see Christ in Scripture like that and we see how unique and elevated and high and lofty and precious he is in his own sake, then we remember if we are in Christ, we remember how he saved us, how he met us in our sin and disobedience, some of you living in open rebellion against Christ and Christ came and had mercy on you, by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit changed your mind, opened your eyes to your sin, drew you to Christ, you put your faith in him, and suddenly there was this blessing of salvation, you knew something about having your sins forgiven, you knew something about having a new power at work in you and new hope, your eyes are alight with life rather than their prior death, there is joy where before there had been sullen darkness, you look back and you remember all of that and you realize that this wonderful Christ in his own right has been wonderful in grace to you and you say, "I love Him. He is the supreme object of my affections. He is eminently worthy in his own right and He has been eminently gracious to me and good to me. I have received undeserved love and mercy and it's only begun, and I'm going to know this love and experience this grace more deeply and profoundly as all of the ages of eternity and the eons of endless time unfold. And I am His, and He is mine."

If you know something of that, then isn't it obvious that you love him? You're devoted to him? He is the pearl of great price? He's the most precious thing in all of the universe? Nothing else could ever substitute for him? "My dearest and best, my most warmest human relationships, my own flesh and blood, nothing compares to Him. I love Him supremely," the redeemed heart says. Well, it's more than just an internal sentiment. It

expresses itself in life. Jesus said so. In the positive sense, he said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. You'll obey Me if you love Me." It could be no other way. Not out of a legal, cold compliance but out of a full-hearted response of love that says, "Whatever You want from me, I am Yours. Look how worthy You are. I give myself to You. Look at what You've done for me. I give myself to You. Look at the fact that I'm going to be with You in eternity. I give myself to You." And when I say, "I give myself to You, I give to You not only in an emotional sense, not only in an intellectual sense, but I give my will to You, I give my volition to You, I surrender my will to Yours. The prayer of my life is not my will but thine be done." It could be no other way. Jesus said in John 15:14, "You're My friends if you do what I command you."

So we obey in response to the holiness of God, we obey Christ, we obey God because he's planned for our obedience, we obey understanding that it deepens our assurance, we obey in love for Christ, fifthly, we obey to serve Christ. We obey to serve Christ. Christ is Lord. Christ is Master. Christ is God. All of those terms communicate the concept of authority. As he is our Master, so we are his slave. As he is Creator, we are his creatures. As he reigns over us, we respond in compliance, in submission to him. It could be no other way. Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" This is incredibly searching, isn't it? You know, we tend to take obedience in a rather trifling way. If it seems convenient, we'll obey. If it's contrary to our desires in the moment, we won't. Well, we need to be repenting of that remnant of our sinfulness and recognizing that being in Christ is to be under his authority, and to be under Christ is to do what he says, and the way that Christ has preeminently made known his will for us is expressed in the moral law. He's not left us to the devices and the motions of our own inconsistent hearts. He has given us a clear standard by which obedience is to be expressed to him. We'll see this as we go throughout the 10 Commandments. I'm just laying a foundation right now.

In 2 Timothy 2 it says this, 2 Timothy 2 if you're taking notes. I know I'm going quickly now. "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." Look, I freely acknowledge that I am inconsistent at best in responding to texts like that. I make no claim of perfection as I stand here before you. The word of God needs to sink into me more deeply just like it needs to sink into you more deeply. We're all in the same boat here but isn't there something in your heart, Christian brother, Christian sister, isn't there something in your heart that says, "Do you know what? That is what I want. That is the deepest part of who I am. I want to be a vessel for honor to Christ. I want to be sanctified, set apart for Him. Whatever days I have left, I want to be useful to my Master. I want to be done with lesser things. I want to rise up with the true church of God and serve Christ and love Him. I want to be marked out by a separation from this world and its false philosophies. I want to name Him before men." Isn't there something like that in your heart? I'm not asking you if it's perfect but as you hear these things from God's word, isn't there something in your heart that starts to beat more strongly in response and say, "Yeah, that's exactly what I want"? That's what's true of every true Christian. No true Christian

could hear these things and say, "Eh, it's not that important to me." That's not the Spirit of Christ that speaks in such attitudes.

Finally, sixthly, lastly: God blesses obedience. God blesses obedience. Go back to Matthew 5. God honors our obedience by blessing us now and blessing us in eternity. In verse 19, the last clause there... Well, let's read the whole verse. "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Elsewhere in Scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:10, it says speaking of believers in Christ, true Christians, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Whether good or bad, what we have done in our body, what we have done in this life, we are going to appear before Christ and he's going to reward us accordingly. Our sins will not be rehearsed there because God said "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Sins have been taken away. But there will be an evaluation of the general tenor of your life. Was there a general direction toward obedience and loving Christ that is evident and visible and Christ will reward you on that basis? And even the reward, beloved, is not something that you deserve, that you merit. Even the reward is a gift of grace. Even the reward is something beyond what you deserve. And I'm quite confident in the mercy and grace and goodness of God that all of us who genuinely appear before him will be rewarded more than we expected, certainly more than we deserve because just as the initial moment of salvation was out of undeserved grace, God will show his undeserved grace to his children in the reward that he gives throughout all of eternity. Hard to know exactly what that looks like. I tend to think that somehow the reward is going to be connected with the sense of capacity, the measure of our capacity to appreciate the grandeur and the glory of God throughout all of eternity. What else could the reward be tied up to except in God himself, in Christ himself, and so that as we have known him in small measure here on earth, in eternity to come we'll know him more fully, more greatly and we'll see it all for the glory of God.

Somehow our reward has to be wrapped up with that but what we've seen from these six principles is this: we obey God in gratitude for a salvation that came to us by grace. We don't obey to earn his favor, we have his favor in Christ, and in response to such undeserved favor, we gladly respond in obedience so that even our obedience is rooted in his grace. Even our obedience and our efforts to walk with him are generated, are produced by his grace, and attended by his grace so that there is effect and success that comes with them. In Philippians 2, the Apostle Paul said this, Philippians 2, the Apostle Paul said this, he said, "So then, my beloved," and this is the closing exhortation to you from Scripture here this morning, Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." The desire to obey comes from grace. The ability to obey comes from grace. The results of obedience come from grace. All that God might be pleased.

So with the hymn writer we say, "Grace taught my heart to fear, grace relieved my fears." Grace drew me to Christ, and now we see that grace helps us to obey the law of our gracious King.

Let's pray together.

Father, in response to the things that we've seen this morning, we simply react in the terms of Your word. It's our desire, Father, to not be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we might prove what Your will is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Help us to that end. May Your Spirit apply the word rightly to our hearts so we might discern our true spiritual condition and having been found in Christ, Father, that our lives would increase in love and obedience to our gracious Master. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.