

Danger of a false profession of faith

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[0 : 0 0] making self-assessment, making evaluations, sometimes even establishing resolutions for the new year. It's a time of preparing to embrace the year that is to come. And in many ways, we are invited to assess and evaluate and think out our lives by this passage. And you'll notice that it is from the end of the Sermon on the Mount. It's the most complete sermon we have of Christ in the gospel. It's Matthew chapters 5 through 7 in the book of Matthew. And in the sermon, Jesus describes the characteristics of those who are part of his kingdom. And he shows how the kingdom transforms people from the inside out. And he shows the principles by which they live and the ways that grace reshapes our priorities and our lifestyles as subjects of his kingdom.

At the end of this sermon, Jesus gives a series of warnings for those who have been drawn by the power of his kingdom and its claims on our lives. I begin with verse 13. He gives the warning of the narrow gate and reminds us that the gate that leads to destruction is broad and the gate that leads to glory is narrow. In verse 15, he gives a warning about false prophets. There are people out there who look like sheep, but inwardly they're ravening wolves. In verse 18, he talks about the danger of bad fruit and warns that any tree that does not bear good fruit is stoned into the fire and is burned. And that brings us to the warning that I wish to address with you this morning, the danger of a false profession of Christian faith. Listen to the warning in Matthew chapter 7, 21 to 23. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly,

I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers. Let's pray that God will illuminate this passage for us and make our hearts tender to the truths that are here for us this morning. Father, we come to you asking for your grace to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We recognize that apart from your grace and your work in us, these words will lie on the page. And we want to see them planted in us. We want to be moved by the truths that are here for us. We want to understand the truths in ways that are richly evangelical and full of grace.

We want to understand the truths in ways that underscore the lordship of Jesus Christ and the necessity of obedience to him. So we pray, Lord, for balance and for understanding and for insight and for clarity as we look at your word. We ask that you would make application of the word in ways that are appropriate to each of us. We depend on that work of your spirit that takes the general preaching of the word of God and applies it to each of our hearts in ways that are most helpful to us. We ask this for Christ's great glory. Amen.

These words in this passage in Matthew chapter 7 are some of the most solemn words ever uttered because they leap across time and space and they confront us to one of the most sobering scenes in all of the universe.

[4 : 01] They confront us with the day of judgment and the day with the day when our destinies will be officially pronounced and that pronouncement will be eternally fixed. And my purpose this morning is just to make a simple exposition of the words that are here and we want to think out what is the text saying? What does it mean for us? So I have three things for you this morning. The simple truth as it is stated.

Secondly, the shocking statement that is made in this passage. And then thirdly, how do we process this? What do we do with this passage of scripture? Notice the simple truth is declared for us in verse 21.

It's declared positively and negatively. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven. And then the positive statement, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will be in heaven in that day when time shall be no more. Now we know that you cannot be a Christian without acknowledging Christ as Lord, without seeing his Lordship. A Christian is someone who believes certain things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in light of that, it's been enabled by the Spirit to have a heart response to him in the ways that he has revealed himself to us in the scripture. So Paul says in Romans chapter 10 that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

[5 : 40] So these are truths. They're truths concerning Jesus Christ that you will know before you even repent and believe. And Jesus is not negating here a correct and true confession of Christ as Lord. There is no salvation without believing that Jesus is Lord. But he is saying that more than just correct theology is necessary.

He's speaking about people who are right in their doctrine about the person of Christ. They recognize who he is. They respond to him by calling him Lord. But what Jesus is saying to us is that not everyone who acknowledges him to be Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. So you can be correct in your understanding about who he is and still be damned.

In fact, James 2 reminds us, doesn't it, that even the devils believe and tremble. So not everyone that says Lord, Lord. Now we know no one can say Lord, Lord without hearing correct teaching about Jesus Christ. In calling him Lord, they are affirming the truth that he is Lord and King.

And they say it with great zeal, Lord, Lord. And they quickly affirm that Jesus is Lord. And this should strike fear in our hearts in many ways because there's only one category of people that can be guilty of a false profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

It's only those who have been taught about Christ. It's only those who have been taught about who he is and what he has done. It's those who have been recipients of special revelation.

[7 : 38] And each of us falls into that privileged class because each of us have heard the truth of the gospel. Each of us could potentially be in this host of people who in that awful day of judgment will hear the words, away from me, you evildoer.

These are people who have seen the reasonableness of the gospel message. They've assented to and embraced the facts of the gospel. They confess Jesus as Lord. They're not secret believers.

And that's what makes this such a sobering passage of scripture for all of us because we are people who have heard the gospel. We have people who have seen the reasonableness of it.

We have, many of us, most of us perhaps, confessed him as Lord. If I were to interview you this morning, most of you would verbally assent to the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord.

You would say, yes, I believe that. You would assent to the truth of the gospel. You would confess him as Lord. And that's what makes this such a sobering passage because it says not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

[8 : 55] So that's the negative statement of this simple truth. The positive statement is really the corollary, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. It's a positive description of the subjects of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is made up of people who do the will of the Father. And our Lord is teaching here that mental assent to the gospel is not enough.

What is necessary is submission of the heart and life to the will of God. The truth that we assent to with our lips must be applied in daily living.

So not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, want to the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. So let us take this teaching from God's word at face value.

The only people who will be found in glory are those whose experience of grace working within have made them willing servants of God's law.

[9 : 59] Not everyone who confesses him as Lord will be found in the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of God from the heart, whose hearts have been transformed by grace, who've experienced that work of God that works from the inside out and changes life and transforms us and makes us willing servants of Christ.

Their lives have been brought into submission to the will of God as he's revealed his will through his spirit in the scripture. Now, we certainly want to be clear.

This is not about earning salvation through obedience. It's about grace producing an internal change that brings obedience to God's will.

And clearly, none of us are capable of perfect obedience to God. We have blind spots. We are subject to our weakness and our frailties. We have the problem of our indwelling sin.

But in every true believer, there is purposeful obedience to the will of God. And if you are purposefully obedient to the will of God, then you're not picking and choosing what things to obey and what things you want to ignore.

[11 : 17] But the grace that produces purposeful obedience to the will of God cannot be indifferent to God's precepts.

So the truth that we're being confronted with here is that the nature of saving faith is such that it transforms our appetites and our desires. It produces a radical transformation that works from the inside out.

It's the kind of transformation that is described in passages like Ezekiel 36. Remember that passage says, I will cleanse you from all of your impurities and all of your idols. We need that kind of radical cleansing.

He says, I will take out your heart of stone. I'll do a heart transplant surgery. I'll give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you to cause you to walk in my ways and remember my commands.

That's really what this passage is describing. It's that work of grace that Ezekiel says works from the inside out. And so the grace of the gospel working within transforms life.

[12 : 22] It cleanses. It delivers. It produces a tenderness toward God and a sensitivity to the spirit of God.

A Holy Spirit motivated desire to obey the will of God. Grace produces gospel transformation.

Transformation that makes it possible for us to say with the psalmist in Psalm 40 verse 8, I delight to do your will, O God. Your law is always within my heart.

I remember when our eldest son was a toddler, we had taught him not to pull himself up by the bookshelves because we were afraid he would pull the bookshelves over on himself. And we left the room and we saw him crawling as fast as he could toward the forbidden shelves, all the while looking over his shoulder to see if he was being watched.

It was one of those sad moments because you can see this little boy already buying into one of the darkest delusions that human beings can embrace.

[13 : 31] That I can do what is wrong and it won't make a difference. There are no overarching moral laws in the universe. There are no moral consequences to my behavior.

I can sin and it won't matter. Now, you know, you and I may not say that. We won't say that. But there are moments when you and I live that delusion also. There are moments when we think, I can disobey God in this situation and it won't make a difference.

I've counseled couples whose marriages were in shambles, whose relationship was full of acrimony and bitterness. There was a time when these two people delighted in one another.

There was a time when just hearing the voice of that person would make the heart leap and they would be full of joy and anticipation of being together.

And now they're full of angry bitterness and hateful acrimony. Why? Well, they convinced themselves that they could sin and it wouldn't make a difference. They could say things that were harsh and unkind.

[14 : 42] They could be indifferent to one another's needs and it wouldn't matter. Somehow it would be okay. I can cheat on my taxes and it'll be okay. I can eat more than I should and it'll be okay.

I can watch movies that I should never watch and it'll be okay. I can commit adultery and it'll be okay. I can skip corporate worship when I'm lazy and it'll be okay.

And somehow in those little moments of life, I can embrace the delusion that it won't matter. And that delusion is a product of something even more profound within because we want to retain ownership over our own lives.

We want to be our own sovereign. We want to write the rules. We want to believe that my liberty, my satisfaction, my pleasure, my power is the most important thing.

If you're a husband who says nasty, harsh things to your wife, you don't say those things because you don't know that they're wrong or because you don't know any better.

[15 : 47] It's because at that moment you don't care about God's call on your life. You've made yourself God. You've said, I want to do this because I want to do it. And that response is dark and dangerous because sin is not just breaking the rules.

Sin is breaking relationship. And here's what's inescapable in this passage. In this passage, it says, if I live a life of unrepentant, spiritual adultery, tacitly denying God's existence, breaking his commands, rejecting his grace, in that final day, he will say, away from me, you evildoers.

And I will spend eternity in the unending torment of hell. So what Jesus is saying to us in this warning is that only those who are purposeful, willing servants of the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven.

And since that is true, if you and I are not intentionally doing the will of God from the heart, if the grace of God working within has not transformed our appetites and our desires and our purposes and made us willing servants of Christ, then we have no ground for claiming to be Christians.

So Jesus is warning us here that mere profession of faith is not enough. The work of the gospel transforms us internally. So when God quickens a person to life, they respond with repentance and faith.

[17 : 23] And repentance and faith are not just the act that is performed once in the initiation of Christian faith, but they're part of the grace in which we stand, because we're always repenting and always casting ourselves on Christ, always believing in Christ.

And so a Christian who is doing the will of God from the heart will be able to point to sins that even in this past week they have had to repent of and seek God for forgiveness and seek forgiveness perhaps from others as well.

Because indifference to the will of God, an attitude of carelessness toward a life of obedience to God is an evidence of a false profession of faith. Now that may sound shocking to us, but it's not only here in Matthew.

This is taught to us throughout the word of God. Think of Hebrews 5.9. It describes Christ as the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Or remember the words of Hebrews 12.14. Make every effort to live at peace with all men and to be holy, for without holiness no one will see the Lord. Or Jesus says in John 14.15, If you love me, you will obey what I command.

[18 : 40] Or perhaps there's no more flat-footed statement of the necessity of obedience than these words from 1 John 3.9-10.

No one who is born of God will continue in sin because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning because he's been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are.

Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. Neither is anyone who does not love his brother. You see, it's not enough for us to be able to point to a time when we accepted Jesus.

Unless grace has made our hearts captive to him and to his commands, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Now we know that salvation is not by works.

We are saved by grace through faith. We are accepted in the beloved because Jesus perfectly obeyed the law of God for us to give us righteousness and died as a sacrifice for the guilt of our sins and paid the, as we learned in Sunday school this morning, paid the penal sacrifice that our sins deserve so that our guilt could be atoned for.

[20 : 05] We are saved because of the work of Christ. We contribute nothing to our salvation. But see, this passage is not about how one comes to faith in Christ. What the passage is about is how I know I'm a Christian, how I know I've come to Christ.

And the assertion of the Lord Jesus Christ himself is that those who have been saved by his grace will obey God. 1 John 2 says it this way, We know that we've come to know him if we obey his commands.

The man who says, I know him, and does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.

This is how we know that we're in him. So that's the simple truth of this passage. Negatively, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven positively, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

It's followed by this shocking statement. That's my second point. Many will say to me on this day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles, and I will tell them plainly, I never knew you.

[21 : 18] Away from me, you evildoers. Many will say to me on that day, now what is the day that is being referred to in this passage? It's the day of judgment.

It's the final day of the Lord. It's the day when we will stand before him and give an account for our words and for our deeds. It's the day that is spoken of later in Matthew chapter 25.

I'll reference that in a few minutes. But why is this such a shocking statement? It's a shocking statement because it involves many. Many will say many.

Many who have proclaimed truth. Many who have been miracle workers. Many who have cast out demons. Many who have taught others. Many who have sat in church listening to God's word.

Many who have studied in the seminaries. These are shocking words. Because in that great day of the Lord, there will be many who thought they knew him.

[22 : 16] And I trust that you will not leave here and that I will not leave here today without examining myself and never asking, am I one of the many? Because if I asked you, again, if I interviewed you and said, do you believe that many in that day will say, you would all agree to that.

You would say, yes. Please don't assume it's not me. Examine your life. Has grace produced in you a purposeful heart of obedience toward God?

Is there evidence of grace working within? That's the challenge of this passage. This is what the passage calls us to.

It's shocking because of the kind of people involved. These are people who are theologically correct. They acknowledge him as Lord. They're fervent. They acknowledge the deity of Christ.

They don't think of him as just a teacher of grand moral principles. It's really the danger of resting on the truthfulness of your confession of faith in Christ.

[23 : 20] It's dangerous to think that because I believe the right things and because I'm zealous and because I've been thoroughly taught, then I'm okay. James reminds us that even the devils believe and tremble.

And these are people who have preached in his name. They've prophesied. And it's teaching us it's possible to teach correct doctrine and yet be outside the kingdom.

If anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ had told us this, we wouldn't believe it. But it's truth taught throughout Scripture. I mean, think of Balaam who prophesied truthfully.

He delivered the right message, but he was a reprobate. Remember the great apostle Paul. He says in 1 Corinthians 9, I buffet my body and bring it under subjection, lest I myself, having preached the gospel, would be a cast off, would be a reprobate.

I think of people in the history of this church who have preached the gospel to some who have become members of the congregation and have gone on to serve Christ and know Christ and the ones who brought them the gospel later walked away from the faith.

[24 : 37] These are people who have cast out devils in his name. Remember when Jesus sent out the 70, they came back and they said, it's amazing, even the devils are subject to us in your name. Now Judas was one of the 70 that was sent out.

We have no indication that it was not true of Judas as well. God in his sovereignty may even give power to do mighty works to those who themselves may be lost.

These are people who have done mighty works in his name. They planted churches, Bible colleges, seminaries, established Christian publishing houses, perhaps been promoters of Christian causes, maybe even missionaries who have preached the gospel, done significant works of mercy.

It's shocking because Jesus disowns them. He says, I never knew you. Now we know he's not saying, I never knew you in terms of mere cognition. He knows us all intimately and personally.

But what he's saying is, I never set my love upon you. I never knew you in the way that he says he knows Israel. Remember he says of Israel, you only have I known of all the nations that are on the earth.

- [25 : 48] I've known you in terms of affection, in terms of special relationship, in terms of saving connection. What Jesus is saying is, I never had a saving relationship with you.
- You were never born of the spirit of God. You were never joined to me. You were never the sheep of my pasture. I never knew you. And it's shocking because of the sentence that will be given, away from me.
- Can you imagine that great day of the Lord when all the nations have been brought before his bar of judgment and the Lord of glory turns to you, to me, fixes his gaze on you.
- Can you imagine hearing those awful words? Away from me. Out of my sight. I never knew you.
- Away from me. What words could hold more despair? Away from me. What words could be more dreadful? Away from me. What words could be more final?
- [26 : 58] Away from me. Away from me. Away from me. Away from me. What separation could be greater than that separation? Away from me. The sentence for all who do not do the will of God from the heart.
- Away from me. I cannot imagine. Can you imagine worse words to hear from the Lord of glory? Away from me. Away from me. Away from me.
- Away from me. The final words of God to those consigned to eternal damnation. Away from me.
- Now this warning is about basic Christian discipleship. Jesus calls us to do the will of God from the heart. He's calling us to be people who love his word.
- People who pray. People who are in fellowship with other believers. People who are not forsaking assembling together on the Lord's day. People who are caring for one another. Who are loving others.
- [27 : 58] Who are living lives organized around knowing God and loving their neighbor. This passage is a broad call to discipleship. The discipleship is not just saying Lord, Lord.
- But it's doing the will of the Father who is in heaven. Now as I've already stated. Let me state again. We are not saved by obedience to God. The obedience that saves is the obedience of Jesus Christ.
- Let us ever be clear on that. He perfectly obeyed for us. He gives us the righteousness we need to stand in the presence of God.
- This passage is not a passage about how to be a Christian. It's not telling us if we do the right things we will get into the kingdom. The passage is answering the question how do we know that we know him.
- And it's a warning to us that there will be many in that great day of the Lord who will think they knew him and they didn't. And the evidence that we are truly his is a life of discipleship.
- [29 : 01] The grace that produces spiritual life within us transforms us from the inside out and makes us people who intentionally, consciously desire to do the will of God.
- If there's no element of heartfelt desire to serve God, to please God, to obey God, then there's no element of grace in your life. And what the passage tells us is in the final day of the Lord, there will be many who will have been self-deceived.
- Many who say, Lord, Lord. Many who have prophesied in his name. Many have cast out demons. Many have done mighty works. And he will say, away from me. I never knew you.
- So the passage is a warning. Now what's the purpose of a warning? A warning apprises you of danger while you still have time to take refuge.

If you're driving along the highway and you see a sign that says, bridge out, you don't think to yourself, I hate these negative people who are always writing scary things on signs.

[30 : 09] Why couldn't they write something nice on the sign like, have a nice day, as I plunge over into the cavern? It's a grace.

The warning is a grace. The warning is mercy. The warning is God. It's God helping us to take stock why we can still find refuge.

Why we can ask ourselves the question, has grace produced works of repentance in me?

Or has it left me substantially unchanged? It's a timely warning from a good God. It's a call to examine yourself. Now finally, my third point, what do we do with this passage?

How do I respond to this message? The truth that all life is moral and judgment is eternal is an uncomfortable truth. It's not a popular truth to teach on and often is largely ignored, even in the Church of Christ.

[31 : 18] We can be thankful for preaching from this pulpit that reminds us of that truth. Remember the passage in Matthew chapter 25, the passage about the sheep and the goats.

Do you remember the difference between the sheep and the goats? The difference was how they responded to those who were hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned.

And it too is a passage about the necessity of obedience to God that is produced by grace working within. The sheep are welcomed to eternal glory with the Father, and the goats are consigned to the hell of fire.

So how do we respond to this warning? I have several points for you. First, we want to examine ourselves. We should be like the disciples in the upper room.

Remember when Jesus says, one of you is going to betray me. Betray me. How do they respond? They didn't say, not me.

[32 : 23] I've got good theology. Not me. I've studied Hebrew. Not me. I testified to the fellows I work with. Their response was one of humility.

Is it I, Lord? Is it I? Is it I? The appropriate response to the warning is to examine yourself. Am I someone who says, Lord, Lord?

Or am I someone who has experienced the grace of God that transforms me from the inside out? So that I can say, I delight to do your will, O God. Your law is within my heart.

Secondly, I think the passage, we want to recognize that there is no moral elasticity. We live in a moral world and we want to think that there's much more moral elasticity than there actually is.

And there are moments when we do that. There are moments when we convince ourselves that something that is wrong is not actually wrong.

[33 : 26] And passages like this are designed to remove confusion. that either grace has produced in me an intentional life of obedience to God or not. The necessity of obedience is clear.

It matters whether or not you obey God. It's a moral universe. Another thing we see in this passage brings us to is the realization that everything you do is morally vertical.

Nothing is truly horizontal. You're made for God. So everything you do has that God word motion to it. It's either a rejection of God's authority or it's a submission to God's authority.

Remember in Psalm 51, David's prayer of confession is not focused on his sin against Bathsheba or Uriah the Hittite, but it's Lord against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Your life is not just horizontal. Every thought, every action, every deed, every motive, every word either reflects living with a heart unto him or turning your back on him.

[34 : 36] And I fear that the church has weakened its resolve in many ways by the moral elasticity of our culture. So we allow things into our hearts and into our minds and into our lives and into our thoughts that we should never entertain or never be entertained by when we think it's okay, but it's not okay.

And this passage reminds us that there are moral consequences in eternal destinies and it's a moral world ruled by a holy God and what I do really matters.

Hear this, brothers and sisters. the fact that this warning is in the scriptures is grace. The God of grace provides these warnings for us so that we could imagine, just so you can imagine hearing those awful words away from me, you evildoers, and respond by casting ourselves on Christ and his mercy and repenting and embracing him and fleeing to the cross of Christ.

We need these warnings because it's so easy for us to be morally asleep and morally lazy, morally flexible, morally self-excusing.

So God in grace gives us these warnings. If you're counting, this is number four, the truth that any should ever hear these awful words should break our hearts.

[36 : 16] That anyone, even people in this congregation here this morning, would ever hear those awful words, depart from me, away from me, ought to make us weep.

And we should respond to this truth with humility. We cannot leave here full of pride and self-righteousness and thinking of the careless Christians that we know that we wish had heard this sermon.

We must be humbled before God. If knowing God and living a life of obedience matters to you, recognize this teaching as a grace and be humbled by it and have a heart that is broken for those who do not submit to this teaching, whose lives have not been transformed by the gospel.

Five, actively fight against the delusion that disobedience doesn't matter. If you're a believer, your heart of stone has been taken away and you've been given a heart of flesh, which means that when you disobey God, your conscience is convicted.

And at that point, you'll either run to God in repentance and faith and seek forgiveness and grace and turn away or you will erect some system of justification for your failure to obey that makes it okay.

[37 : 43] And we are incredibly skilled at doing that. We are incredibly skilled at developing plausible arguments that make what is not okay, okay. I've had times when I'm teaching on child rearing and I'm teaching about pleasant words to promote instruction and on more than one occasion I've had a dad come to me and say something like this.

Whoever wrote that thing about pleasant words to promote instruction doesn't live in my house. That's kind of a funny thing to say. But there you have it.

I mean, you see what's been done. A little quip that kind of makes disobedience to God okay. And we're very skilled at doing that.

Whoever wrote that didn't have my kids. Force yourself number six five this is five again I think I miscounted this is a six force yourself to see disobedience as sinful.

A man lusting after a beautiful woman does not see himself as rejecting God's authority. Kids who have broken the rules and shredded the boundaries their parents set up for them don't see themselves as rebels.

[39 : 02] They just feel the rush. The young woman who dresses and carries herself in such a way to be alluring doesn't see the wickedness the pride the rebellion against modesty.

She just feels the power it gives her. or the man who demeans his wife's concerns and argues her into a corner and mocks her as a silly woman doesn't see himself as a high handed rebel against God.

He just savors the verbal victory. The child takes the cookie that he was told he had to wait for until after dinner doesn't see himself in rebellion against God.

He just savors the joy of getting away with it. See, sin is deceitful. Sin is not beautiful. Sin is ugly. It's abhorrent. We should hate it. And finally, celebrate grace every day.

Recognize that as important as obedience is to God, we are not saved by our obedience. You can never obey thoroughly enough, long enough, be good enough, do it well enough to earn acceptance and to be loved.

[40 : 20] The problem you and I have is that we are sinners and my problem is not the world I live in. It's not the people around me. My problem as a sinner is the fact I carry it within me.

It's me. I'm a sinner who daily needs grace. And as we look at our sins, we need to take one look at our sin as Robert Murray McShane said, take ten looks at the cross.

Because we know we can never reconcile ourselves to God through our obedience. And the emphasis of this passage is that obedience is an evidence of God's grace.

Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to save people like you and me who are broken, who are by nature, rebels against God and against his will and his purposes.

He had to leave glory for me. He had to live a sinful life for me and for you. He had to bear the separation from the Father that our sins deserve. Because sinners cannot obey their way out of corruption.

[41 : 30] They must be rescued by grace. And the only hope for us is grace. grace. It's grace that makes obedience important.

Because the love of Christ compels me. Christ died so that I might no longer live to myself but live to him who loved me and gave himself for me. So that even obedience is a celebration of grace.

And let me just speak for a moment to anyone here who may have been convicted by this message and there have been points at which you felt the pinch of God's word today. And you've seen your rebellion against God's law.

Perhaps your carelessness about the necessity of obedience to God. And I want to invite you today to seek the face of Jesus Christ. Because the right response to this message is not, I better make sure I obey so that I'll go to heaven.

So that I'll never hear those words away from me. Because if you see a lack of obedience to God that grace produces within the heart and life of the redeemed, the response to that lack of obedience is not, I've got to do better.

[42 : 53] That simply reinforces our pride and our self-righteousness. It doesn't move us to God, it moves us away from God. the only correct response to this message is to cast yourself on Christ.

It's really Isaiah, I'm drawing a blank on the passage 63 I think, but seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts and let them turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he shall surely pardon.

The proper response to conviction of sin as a result of this message is not, I've got to leave here and do better. The proper response is, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he is near. He's near to you right now, that's why you're convicted. Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, the evil man his thoughts and let him turn unto the Lord for he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will freely pardon.

[44 : 03] So if you're convicted, seek the Lord. Perhaps you want to find a godly friend or an elder with whom you can pray. But if you leave here without doing business with God, you risk losing this moment of conviction and grace.

And a moment of conviction and grace when your heart is moved by God's word is precious. You want to seize that moment and seek the Lord. Paul says it this way in Philippians or excuse me, Titus chapter two, the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all people, teaching us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled upright godly lives in this present age, waiting for the blessed hope of the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous to do what is good.

Let's pray together. Father, we pray that your word would move us and would abide deeply within us. I pray, Lord, for anyone who is convicted by your word this morning, that you would help us to seek the Lord while he may be found, to embrace Christ, to cast ourselves on Christ even in this moment of conviction.

And I pray, Lord, that you would draw us to Christ, that our response to this passage would not be, I've got to get my act together and do better, but our response would rather be, oh, God, I need you, because it's only grace working within the human heart that can make me a willing subject of God that delights in the will of God, and I want that grace.

Give us this, we pray, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Our final hymn is number 508, and I wanted to just comment on that hymn as you turn to it, because it's a hymn that calls us to Christ.

[46 : 31] Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to your bosom fly. Notice, thou, oh Christ, are all I want, more than all in thee I find. Verse 3, just and holy is your name, I am all unrighteousness, false, and full of sin I am.

Thou art full of truth and grace, plenteous grace, verse 4, with thee is found, grace to cover all my sin. Let the healing streams abound, make and keep me pure within.

Thou of life, the fountain art, freely let me take of thee, spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity. That's what we need. If you're moved by God's word, what you need is not to get your act together, do better.

What you need is to cast yourself on the Savior. Let's sing of this number 508. Please stand.

Lord, let me do thy bosom fly, while the nearer waters roll, of the tempest still is high.

[48 : 01] Thine me, O my Savior, I, till the storm of life is found, sing into the haven guide.

O receive my soul at last. One other refuge have I done.

Thanks, my open soul on thee, thee body be not alone.