



Christianity in Real Life-Part 12

Understanding Obedience as Christ Does

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, as you've heard, there's a lot going on in eastern Ukraine this morning. I should say this evening—it's 10 hours ahead over there. But Sunday night, I came up to you to talk about it. You might say, "Yeah, I know, there's a lot going on in eastern Ukraine and Ukraine in general. But I don't really know what's going on in Ukraine." Well, you wouldn't be alone. A lot of people, of course, have heard about it, but they don't know all about it. And I'll tell you, it's not for lack of information.

We live in the information age; we're bombarded with information. When something like what's going on in Ukraine takes place in our world with international significance, it is all over. You can't listen to a news broadcast without it; you can't pick up a paper that doesn't have, you know, a top story in it. You can't watch broadcast—it's everywhere. If you go to Google News and you type in "Ukraine," you will have over 900 million links to click on. That's an incomprehensible number of websites—900 million.

And if you go to the news section and say, "I just want coverage in real time,"—I thought that might help me kind of narrow it down—"So, coverage in real time, give me the published articles today in legitimate papers, give me what's out there," and I had over 9,000 articles. Now think that through. Even if you're a speed reader, you really are swift—it would take you probably two to three months, and that's without sleep, to read everything that was published in the last 24 hours on Ukraine. And then there'd be tomorrow's news when you're done with all that.

This is an inordinate amount of information. But a lot of people, of course, gloss over information, even though it may be intrinsically important and have all kinds of international significance, because they feel like, "Well, it's not relevant to me, and I don't know, it doesn't impact my life, and it's not really all that interesting. And, you know, did my basketball team win today?" I mean, that's where a lot of people live. Because all information is not created equal. And everyone lives that way—they sort through their information and decide what they think is important, and they get their mind around what they think is relevant to their lives.

If I said, "Well, after church, I'm going to take everyone skydiving—take everybody skydiving. And none of this, you know, instructor-is-strapped-to-you instructor—we're not going to do that. Everyone's solo skydiving. So first time—I know many of you first-timers, that's fine. We're gonna go to the airport, I got a fleet of planes out there, and we're all gonna have the wonderful and joyful freeing experience of skydiving. And so we're going to leave at about two o'clock. But right after church, when I'm done preaching in the third service, what I'm going to do is hold a little



instructional meeting and we're going to talk about how to do it." How do you think the attention level would be?

First of all, you can say, "I would never go skydiving with you—never." So I get that; this is an illustration. Let's say you had to—gun is to your head—you have to do it. Now, I think you're going to be paying rapt attention to every bit of information I give you. And you're going to be on your iPad, figuring out, "Okay, is what he's saying—is it true? Is it right?" Why? Because it's very relevant to your life. Because at 2:30, we're pushing you out of an airplane with a pack on your back. You better know how to do this.

See, all information not created equal. And most people intuitively discern the difference between relevant information and irrelevant information, and they respond accordingly. Usually it's an intuitive process. But sometimes it's not all that intuitive. Our students, our teenagers, kind of figure this out: you have a teenager who maybe wants to be an engineer, right? They have this knack for it. And so they're going through high school, and they're taking all these really hard math classes, and they're coming home thinking, "I don't even like this math. It's so hard. It's so irrelevant. I don't really need this. It's not important." And some Tuesday afternoon, their math teacher says, "No, wait a minute, kid, don't you want to be an engineer? This is really important. You don't understand how it doesn't feel important because all your buddies are not talking about math on the weekends. But this is important for you."

Sometimes you need a teacher to tell you that—though you just want to kind of skim through the information—it's someone very caring who will say, "You better care about this information. It better become a part of the fabric of your life, because if not, it'll have ramifications in your life down the road."

That's precisely what's happening here in Luke chapter 6 as we get to the end of the Sermon on the Plain, where Jesus comes to the end of the message and basically, like a math teacher to a wannabe engineer, says, "You don't realize how important this information is. This ought to become a part of the fabric of your lives." Turn there with me and look at this very stern warning from Christ about making sure that information about God and Christianity and the Christian life and theology and doctrine doesn't become to you like information about, you know, international politics. It becomes something so important—it's like you're sitting on the tarmac with the wind from the props of the plane blowing in your hair, saying, "I better get this because I'm about to get on that plane. Please tell me again, I need to know."

This is a very, very poignant passage. Take a look at it with me beginning in verse 46 of Luke chapter 6. Please turn there and see this with me. Luke 6:46, as Jesus puts it, probably as tersely as you could say it: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"



“Everyone,” verse 47 says, “who comes to me and hears my words and does them”—this is not passive listening; this is active listening, ready to get involved and engage in applying what he’s just taught—“I’ll show you what he’s like. He’s like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood rose, the stream broke against that house, and it could not shake it”—why?—“because it had been well built.” That’s someone who’s getting this information, understanding the information, applying the information.

Now, there’s one that doesn’t—verse 49: “But the one who hears and does not do them”—does not do what His Word says—“he’s like a man who built his house on the ground without a foundation. And when the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Now a lot of sermons end with a poem and a nice, you know, comforting prayer. Jesus’ sermon doesn’t end that way; it ends with a warning. Now there is some encouragement in the middle—if you look at verses 47 and 48—that’s kind of a positive encouragement to do what he says. But it begins with a very authoritative word in verse 46. Let’s work through these three motivations to try and look at the Word of God—whether it’s preached to you, whether you crack it open tomorrow morning before you go to work—how do you respond to that information? Do you read it like a news website, or do you take it in as though it is the most important, relevant information that needs to be applicable and applied to the decisions of your day?

That’s the decision we need to make when we encounter the truth of Christ and all that he taught. And let’s look at them one at a time. Let’s start at the beginning and work right through it. Verse 46: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

Now, of course, you’ve been around enough in church to know the word “Lord” is not some, you know, medieval word. The word in the New Testament is a word that really has this sense of the ultimate authority who is in charge. It is implicit in that this person has authority over you, and it is kind of our modern equivalent—I suppose it may even weaken the word—but it is the modern equivalent of “boss.”

So let’s think this through for a second. Let’s take our engineering student who actually gets through not only high school but college, and he puts out his résumé and he gets an engineering job at Fluor—as long as we’re close to it, right across the street. And so, Fluor Corporation—38,000 employees—they’re an international company, Forbes 500, big company, big engineering and very important firm, and he gets a job there. And he’s unpacking in his cubicle, his desk, and he gets that job, and he’s so excited—he’s got his engineering job that he wants—and in walks David Seaton, CEO and president of Fluor Corporation.



Now think about this guy: he's doing pretty well financially; he oversees almost 40,000 employees and this international very lucrative company. He walks in from his Texas office there in Irving, Texas, and he comes to Orange County right across the street, and he sees my imaginary engineering student. And as he's unpacking his desk, he says, "Hey, young man, you're our new engineer here? Great. I got a project for you. I have some instructions."

Now, feel that—do you feel it? What's your option at that point? Well, I guess have the shortest career in engineering at Fluor ever—or pull out your pad of paper, your iPad or your computer, click it on, open your laptop and start taking notes. "Yes, sir, Mr. Seaton. What can I do for you?" That would be the right perspective.

Unfortunately, we live in a world that doesn't operate that way because, of course, Jesus is no David Seaton. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He doesn't have 38,000 employees; he doesn't feed 38,000 people; he doesn't provide for 38,000 people—he provides for billions of people through all of time. He gives everyone life and breath and everything else—even the animals on the planet he's providing for, as the Bible repeatedly says. And when the CEO of the universe says something to you, we don't need a lot of reasons to do it. He is to be responded to just by virtue of him being the Lord. Jesus asked a good question: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?" Why would this engineer say, "Well, there's the boss," and not do what he asks? It's an unthinkable arrangement in anyone's mind.

Number one on your outline: When it comes to the motivations for you and I to open our Bibles and be very responsive—to listen to a biblical sermon and be very responsive, to read a Christian book that accurately presents the truth and be very responsive to what we're reading—is because Christ is Christ. Let's obey Christ for Christ's sake. Let's just say, really, regardless of what else it may do for me, regardless of how it feels, regardless of what the outcome might be, I need to obey the One who has all of the authority.

And Jesus isn't "one of the boys." Jesus isn't one of the guys. Jesus isn't some collaborative flatline management leader. Jesus is very clearly the authority who has no problem looking at you and saying, "Don't harbor bitterness in your life. To me, that's as egregious as you murdering someone. Don't look at that woman lustfully, because to me, that's as bad and on the spectrum of you committing adultery and being unfaithful to your wife. Stop it; don't do this; do that." He has no problem barking commands—if that's how you'd like to see it. And when you respond to the poignant words and the very difficult words of Scripture that call you to be a different person than you are, you need to remember: he's the boss. I have no other option.



Turn with me, if you would, to the book of Revelation, which is always helpful as kind of the dust and fog of humanity clears at the end of time. And in Revelation 17, there's a great statement here that defines for us three categories: the category of those who see the Boss and respond to the Boss as the Boss; those who see the Boss and hate the Boss; and category number three—the Boss—and explaining something about how important the Boss is.

This is a helpful, tiny little passage; there's not much here, I mean, in terms of length, but I just want to point out a few verses in the middle of Revelation 17—actually drop all the way down to verse 13. If you glance through some of the context here and you know anything about the book of Revelation, we've got this picture during the tribulation period of a great movement of leaders who consolidate their power in one great leader called the "beast" in this apocalyptic scene. So all of these kings, they give their authority to the beast, and it says in verse 13, Revelation 17:13—follow along as I read it, please—"These are of one mind"—they're all together on this—"and they hand over their power and authority to the [ultimate leader], the beast." Well, he's the ultimate worldly leader, unless—at least—they, all these leaders of the planet, "will make war on the Lamb." It's almost comical—if you didn't have an ecclesiastical, religious definition of the Lamb—it's almost comical that kings go lamb hunting. What are you talking about?

Well, of course, the Lamb was introduced to us in the beginning of the book—Revelation 4 and 5—as not being some woolly cuddly little creature, but being the Lamb who had the marks of being slain, but he is, in fact, the One who possesses all authority, all power, all wealth, all majesty. Go to the Lamb. And he's explained here: they try to conquer the Lamb, but they can't—"the Lamb will conquer them." You don't make war with the Boss—you just don't; you're gonna lose—"for he is"—and here's why—"the Lord of lords"—the Boss of bosses—"and King of kings," the sovereign over all those that have a sense of sovereignty over other things. "And those with him are the called and chosen"—I love this last word—"and [what?] faithful."

Do you see the two groups? And, by the way, you don't have to wait for the tribulation to get this bifurcation of the world. Matter of fact, in the margin, you might want to jot Psalm 2—you might remember we studied this and walked through that psalm very carefully not long ago—where we looked at the world's idea of fighting against the authority of Christ. The reason—if I get on, you know, CNN, or MSNBC, or even Fox News, and I start getting up there this afternoon talking about biblical sexual ethics—let's think about that—and you tune in, there's my pastor who's always talking about very touchy subjects, and I just lay it out on TV exactly the way the Bible says it—what's the response going to be? How's that gonna go over? How's the world going to enjoy that little afternoon of biblical commentary by Mike Fabarez on the news? They will rage against that. The Bible says, "The nations rage." They say, "Let us cast off the fetters of the LORD and his Anointed"—that's the word for the Christ. "Let's just get rid of all this."

That psalm pictures the society that we live in. Back to Fluor across the street—Fluor Corporation—young engineering student, Boss walks in. The amazing thing about the reality of the



chemistry of that encounter is he's in the middle of this sea of cubicles in the Fluor building here in Aliso, and everyone sees the Boss walk in and they go, "The Boss—what an idiot. Hate the Boss." They don't stand up and greet him. They don't call him "sir." They're making paper airplanes and throwing them around, tossing around wads of paper, got their music blaring. Here comes David Seaton in his nice pressed suit and his white shirt, and the kid sitting in the new cubicle is like, "This is the Boss," and he's gonna take a lot of excuses—at least he's going to be in internal turmoil about how to respond to the Boss because no one seems to care about the Boss.

You know that's where you live—you do understand that. And you live, by the way, in the corner of the cubicles in Southern California that's very rebellious against the Boss. And that's why it's hard for us to stand up and say, "Yes, sir. What did you say? Yes, sir, I will do exactly what you say. I will do this. Whatever you ask, I will be obedient—just because you're the King." That's hard for us to do because everything is moving us in a direction of, "You know what? We don't like the Boss. We don't like his rules. We don't like all of these assignments. You know, you just do what you [want]." "You can listen to this—He's all bark and no bite." That's what they think of Christ.

It's why, by the way, the New Testament ends with—not a happy book, have you noticed that? Pollyanna never was quoting the book of Revelation—did you notice that? That's a harsh book. My pastor used to say—and I've quoted it many times—"Jesus is coming back and he's real mad." It doesn't end well. This is a scene—Armageddon is a horrific scene—of Jesus saying, "Well, I know you think I'm all bark and no bite." But, as the bottom of Psalm 2 says, "You better kiss the Son"—you better kiss the Son—"lest he be angry, and you perish in the way," because "his wrath is quickly kindled." Better make peace with him. You'd better—as the last segment of this text in verse 14 says—you ought to be part of the called, the chosen; and they're always described as "Yes, sir"-kind of people—the faithful.

How do you respond when you hear a sermon that's biblically based? I don't care if you like the preacher or you don't like the preacher—when the Word of God is presented to you like a website about something that may not even interest you, if it's coming from God's Word, how do you respond to that?

One more passage on this—turn to John 10 if you would. That's the part that grates against what you normally find in your average Christian bookstore—this part now. I want to underscore—not because you haven't heard it—but because I want you to know I understand there's two sides to this. To obey Christ for Christ's sake is not just to remember his authority vested in him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. There's more to it than that. But just know this: when you start feeling a lot better about this part of the first point than you did about the first part of the first point, recognize both of these are laid side by side in Scripture, and both of them ought to be part of your motivation—to recognize that we obey Christ just because he's Christ.



Now I understand he's not an autocratic leader; he's not this mean dictator; he doesn't sit here with his eyes rolled back in his head, saying, "Do! Do! Don't! Don't!" That's not the Christ we serve. And yet, if he were, he's the King; he's the Boss. This is the kind of Boss we have—one that is willing to analogize his leadership in your life like a shepherd leading sheep—which is a bit insulting if you've ever spent any time watching and observing sheep. And yet, it's a lot more pastoral—literally. And it's idyllic, and it's nice, and it's pleasant, and a guy with this outfit and a big stick in his hand, and he's walking, and he's leading, and he's bringing—he's bringing those sheep into these nice pastures. I kind of like that.

Well, there is inherently in that illustration a sense that when the Shepherd says "Go," you go; when he says "Stop," you stop; you obey the Shepherd—I get that. But it's not just that he's the leader and a lot smarter than you and you're just the lamb. It's that, according to John chapter 10—drop down to verse 11—he describes himself not as the Boss Shepherd, not as the autocratic Shepherd, not as the authoritative Shepherd, not as the Shepherd of shepherds; he describes himself in verse 11 as—what kind of Shepherd?—Good Shepherd. "I am the good shepherd." Well, how would you define that, Christ? Verse 11, middle of the verse: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

A hired hand won't do that—verse 12—"He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and he"—good word to highlight—"cares nothing for the sheep." Now, how much does the Good Shepherd care? Well, verse 11 said he is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." And there's a biblical sense to that word—"I love my own, and my own, they love me." By the way, in verse 27—you might want to put that in the margin or look down to it—"My sheep hear my voice"—they respond to me; they do what I ask. But part of the motivation of knowing him and doing what he asks and hearing his voice and being responsive is because he's the Good Shepherd. How good is he? He's laid down his life for the sheep.

Okay, now you're in that very rebellious corner of the cubicles in the Fluor building. David Seaton walks in after getting off a plane in Orange County from the big, you know, corporation in Texas. He walks in now, and now he asks you to pull out a pad of paper because he's got a project for you to do; and everyone else is going, "Oh, the Boss... What a jerk, the Boss." And you look at him, and here's the thing you realize: not only is he the Boss, and this is the right thing—to obey the Boss (that is a good motive and it's a biblical motive)—but you look beyond that and you say, "He loves me. He sacrificed himself for me."

Let's just say there was a little incident that happened just after you got hired—actually the first time you ever met the Boss—and you were under threat. You were coming in, I don't know, the back door of the seediest outpost of Fluor Corporation, and when you did, there was this gang coming up to kill you and murder you—you happened to be with your family to show them where



you were going to work—and here was David Seaton walking up, and he saw the threat, and he was willing to intervene and save you. And not only that—as all these guys pulled out their guns to shoot your family—he dove in front of your family and took bullets for you. And when they thought they’d killed this guy, everybody scattered. And you sat there cradling the head of your Boss as he’s bleeding and dying. Paramedics get there; they take him to the hospital; they put him in ICU for weeks. He recovers. You’ve watched him recover and be nursed back to health. It’s been in the news—you were the guy he saved. Now, this is your second encounter with Mr. Seaton as he walks into your office in Aliso Viejo. And he says to you, “I’ve got a project for you to do. Would you do this for me? It’s going to take you to a foreign country; we’ve got to set up this thing here; you’re probably going to have to stay in some, you know, bad hotels along the way, and it’ll be costly. I just need you to do this for me.”

While everyone else is rolling their eyes at David Seaton—“The Boss is a jerk,” and all of that—you look at him and don’t just say, “Well, this is the right—I obey because it’s the right thing to do.” That is a good motive, and it’s a biblical motive. But you look beyond that and you say, “He loves me. He sacrificed himself for me. He’s got scars under his nice white pressed shirt of the bullet holes that he took for me. He had to be nursed back to health by the ICU nurses. And now he walks and lives again. But he did this—he laid down his life for me.” Are you going to roll your eyes and mock his standards like everybody else in your little rebellious corner of the cubicles? I don’t think so.

You recognize this: you need to obey Christ, regardless of what it does for you—just for Christ’s sake. He’s the authority. But he’s a loving authority. He’s an authority that proved his love for you by laying down his life for you.

Alright, that’s all I really wanted to say about the first point here—just to get it into my head for a second. But I’ve got to have a little sidebar with you, and I hate to do this. But if it’s not for you, it’s for your critical friend—your critic—who loves to acquiesce to your view of Christianity and Christ and obeying Christ and all that, because in his mind—or maybe in your mind—you think, “Well, okay, as long as it’s the red letters.” Doesn’t Jesus say in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?” Alright, give me the red-letter Bible, and I’ll respond to the red letters.

Now, here’s the thing about people that think that way: they haven’t even read all the red letters—you know that. The red letters are jarring. Some of them are nice: “The Lord cares for the lilies of the field; he’ll care for you.” “Oh, I like that Jesus.” But there’s more to Jesus than the red letters. There’s more to Jesus than the favorite red-letter verses.



As a matter of fact, Jesus of the New Testament kept affirming the morality and ethics of the Old Testament—the standard of righteousness embedded in the Mosaic Law, the Old Testament. Jesus kept repeating it; he kept reiterating it. Now there was a part of it that he came to fulfill that was completely obliterated after he got here and did his work on the cross. We call that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. That's why you didn't bring a goat or an ox to church this morning. That's why I'm not sitting here with a fancy little chest plate that has all these jewels that represent the twelve tribes of Israel—because we are not any longer practicing the ceremonial dictates of the Old Testament.

Know this though: while Jesus made it clear that he is setting aside the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, he constantly reiterated to his listeners—and we dealt with a lot of it, even in the Sermon on the Plain—he kept reiterating the moral law of the Old Testament. He didn't rescind any of that. Therefore, when he says, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?” we cannot neglect all that body of teaching in the Old Testament that is the moral law of God.

Secondly, at the end of his ministry he made this super clear—he made it clear at the beginning, but he really camped on it in the Upper Room Discourse before he was betrayed and crucified—he made this very clear: “I’ve chosen you guys to be my apostles.” Very important technical word in the New Testament—used a couple times in a non-technical sense, but the technical use of the word is very clear: you are my ambassadors, my representatives—not the kind of ambassadors that we are with a small “a,” but the kind with a capital “A,” that when you speak, you’re speaking for me.

Paul can say it this way when he went to the Thessalonians over there in Asia Minor, and he could say to them—I’m quoting now, 1 Thessalonians 2—“You received from me the Word of God; you received it for what it was, not the word of man, but the Word of God.” Therefore, the apostles when they speak—and they have black letters—when they write their letters, they’re saying things that come with the full weight and authority of Jesus Christ. So much so that Peter can say in 2 Peter 3, when people start twisting the writings of the Apostle Paul—who I know your liberal friends don’t like, because he’s always getting into the minutiae of all the ethical stuff they don’t like, and so they stick with the red letters—listen: when Paul’s words are twisted, Peter says, “they do it to their own destruction.” What’s the implication there? They have divine authority—“they do it to their own destruction as they do the rest of the Scriptures,” which is the word for the authoritative body of God’s Word to mankind.

Therefore, when you read verse 46 of Luke 6—“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”—it not only includes the red letters, it includes the black letters of the Old Testament that speak the moral law, and everything in the New Testament that is written by the apostles and prophets. That cannot be ignored.

Now, that may not be convincing for you skeptics, or your skeptical friends, or someone listening to me now on the radio, because you think, “Well, a lot of things I don’t agree [with].” Great—we could preach on that for a long time, and I think I could convince you, but if I couldn’t convince you in this short time, it is certainly a point for us to research together at another time. And you go back on the Focal Point website and find all kinds of messages on this. But as a sidebar, I need to put that little caveat on the first point: obey Christ—and that, with the caveat, means everything that he affirms morally in the Old Testament, which is all the moral teaching of the Old Testament, and everything that his apostles then later penned—and do it for his sake. He’s the Lord.

Verses 47 and 48—“Everyone that comes to me”—this is printed there in your worksheet—Luke 6:47–48—“hears my word and does them,” which, by the way, I could preach hours, I’m sure, until you’re sick of hearing me—which, I don’t know, maybe right about now at this point for all I know—but we could go on and on about how important that phrase is: that Jesus’ teaching is assumed in his mind to be done, that there’s something to do, that there is a response of the listener to actually act, that the Word must be applied.

This is the positive though: if you do take his words and you do them—which, of course, is beyond the red letters—“I’ll show you what he’s like: he’s like a man building a house,” verse 48, “who digs deep, lays the foundation on the rock; the flood arose, the stream broke against the house; it could not shake it; it had been well built.” Now, the picture there is of the benefit. You should obey Christ whether there are no benefits. Jesus is quick to add: but there are benefits.

Number two: You should remember the benefits. You should remember the benefits. There are rewards for obedience, and that’s important for us to remember. And that’s a motivation given throughout the Bible starting in the very beginning of the Bible and continuing on through every book of the New Testament. There is reward; there is benefit for obedience. And you and I, when we respond positively to whatever our temptation is on Tuesday—we say “no” to sin and “yes” to righteousness—you can be assured of this: there is benefit.

Now, by way of review—and this may be too complete for us, because, you know, we’re just focusing on these three verses—but the context has already revealed a bit of the benefits of obedience. Just by way of review real quick—verse 44—you have Luke 6... it says in verse 44, “A tree is known by its fruit.” Now, this is not what verses 47–48 are looking to specifically, but it certainly is one of the benefits: a tree is known by its fruit. Now, it’s known not only to others, but it’s known to me. One thing I like is to know for sure that I’m a Christian; it’s called assurance. Here’s one of the benefits of obedience: I sense assurance—I’m really saved. “We know we’re children of God”—we keep his commandments. That’s how I know. “By this,” 1 John 3, “the children of God and those [who aren’t]—the devil [’s]—are obvious.” How come? Children of God—they do what is righteous. So when I look at my life and I see a trajectory of increasing sanctification, here’s a benefit: I feel assured about my Christianity. My work and my progress in

sanctification gives me assurance that I am truly justified. That's the arrangement in the New Testament.

Verse 42—you look back up—here was another thing we noted when we dealt with this passage: “Take the log”—look at the bottom of the verse—“take the log out of your own eye”—this is the bottom of verse 42, Luke 6—“take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck that is in your brother's eye.” And we said, as a part of the Christian life, it's very important that we encourage and stimulate one another to love and good deeds, and God wants to make you useful in his economy. And when you say “no” to sin in yourself and say “yes” to righteous behavior, you are now more equipped and ready and useful to be used by God. I put it this way: obedience prepares us for effective ministry. There's all kinds of associated blessings and benefits to that. When you get to the end of your life—at your funeral—and we talk about how you made an impact for Christ in people's lives—that's a good thing. And so obedience certainly is—there's a benefit.

Creep up there in verse 42 to the middle of it. This was something that a lot of readings of this text miss, but look at it: he says, “You yourself don't see the log that's in your own eye”—when you have that hypocritical, “I want to do ministry, but I'm not interested in obeying Christ myself”—he calls you a hypocrite. “Take the log out of your own eye, man.” Now, we said this when we dealt with this passage not long ago: we often in our minds jump real quickly to hypocrite being an appellation for the Pharisees—the bad guys, the lost people, the sons of hell, as Jesus says in Matthew 23. Not who we're talking about here. Hypocrite is a word that is used with Christians in some contexts, and this is one of them. And we said this: when Jesus is calling you a hypocrite, your relationship with him is not all that great that day. You don't want him saying, “Get behind me, Satan.” That's not the best day of your Christian life. So Christians can do things that are wrong, and that affects our fellowship with God.

If we're building a quick list just in the context—and this is the last one that we'll look at on this—obedience provides assurance; obedience prepares us for effective ministry; and obedience improves our fellowship with God. Now I know that's heretical for some people—but they're wrong when they say that's heretical—because the Bible is super clear. And we looked at this—“Draw near to God; he'll draw near to you.” There are so many passages where the context is clearly Christians improving their relationship, intimacy, fellowship with God because of obedience. And all that's great. But that's not what our text is talking about. Why? Because the illustration in verses 46–47—let's look at the passage now—is about being prepared to withstand some kind of pressure on our lives.

Now, some people can look to the ultimate—standing before God on judgment day—but that's not the thing that makes us impervious to hell. Let's talk about the context that we're dealing with: “I've told you to do things; now do them—I'm the Lord.” Then he says, “You'll be like someone who's built a house on a firm foundation.” Now, what does that imply in the illustration? There's



going to be things that will hit your life, and you will be able to stand against that. You will have—let's pick some words—here's one of the benefits of obedience in this particular passage: fortitude, courage, strength, endurance. Life is going to throw things at you—how will you respond to those?

There is something about—and it touches on something we've already dealt with—and that is a clear conscience. We dealt with that in a previous message in the Sermon on the Plain. There's something about that kind of integrity that allows me to have the kind of resilience, the kind of endurance, the kind of strength to stand up against stuff. It is in a saying—if I want a one-sentence proverb—Proverbs 28:1: "The wicked flee when no one pursues"—they're really jumpy—"but the righteous"—you know the text—"are as bold as a..." Puppy? Alligator? Iguanas? What does it say? Lion—thank you, interactive nine o'clock crowd. A lion. Is it the rain? Is it discernment? Is it no coffee this morning? Lion. "The righteous are as bold as a lion."

Think about that. I'd like my life to have the kind of courage and fortitude of a lion. Let me give you one example of this: the Apostle Paul. Turn with me to Acts—Acts chapter 21. Here's an example of life—and we don't get this advantage—but life being shown to the Apostle Paul in a forecast, a preview, through this prophet named Agabus, where he knows that if he goes to Jerusalem, he's going to be imprisoned and he's going to be persecuted. So that's the context.

Right—we've got a lot of these missions trips; we talk about the short-term mission trips. And let's just say I was about to take a trip to the Guatemala missions trip, but I'm going to do a little, you know, preview, a little reconnaissance trip. And so maybe Pastor Lucas and I are going to get on a plane to go to Guatemala, and you find out—I don't know how; somehow—let's just say, in the context of the book of Acts, you know that if we go there, we are going to be imprisoned, and we're going to be beaten, and we're going to be persecuted, and it's going to be terrible. You would come to me—I would hope some of you wouldn't—but most of you would say, "Please don't go, Pastor Mike. It's going to be really bad for you there." It's exactly the scene here in Acts 21, dropping into verse 12: "When we heard this"—and Luke is writing in the first person plural because he was in this group at this particular point in Acts—"when [we] and the people there heard that there was going to be tough times and persecution and imprisonment for Paul, we... urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Don't go there, man. If that's what's going to happen there, don't do it." And Paul answered them—listen to him roar—"What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Would you like to have a little bit of that courage—even like three days out of the week? That is the kind of impervious, strong, "Hey, throw the storm at me; I'm ready." That's the kind of life that's ready to die for Christ, that's lived in a whole different way, on a whole different plane, with a whole different kind of fortitude about facing life and its trials and its persecutions. You want to know one of the things that makes this a reality? Your life is in step with God's truth; you're responding obediently to the Lord; and you say, "If it costs me—bring it on."

Verse 14: “Since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’” Let’s run the clock forward—chapter 25 of Acts. A lot that goes on between then and here. But he ends up being imprisoned, just like was predicted. He’s in a prison in Caesarea, which—if you’ve been there with us on one of our Israel tours—you think it’s so idyllic, but you have to picture it as the Roman garrison that it was, and it was a prison for Paul, even though it was on the beautiful shores of the Mediterranean. And he’s a prisoner who’s been beaten, and he’s certainly in a bad situation. He’s called before Festus—the governor, if you will. Look at verse 10: “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal”—not the one in Rome, but the proxy one here in Caesarea, not too far from the inland city of Jerusalem—“where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourselves know very well.” What’s that called? Clear conscience. What’s that called? Integrity. Doing the right things. “If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death”—but “if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” “Do this to me; send me to Rome.” That’s a kind of clear conscience—a man who’s doing what God’s Word says—and he’s not afraid. That’s the picture, is it not, of this idea of: “Do what I tell you, and you’ll be like a man who’s built his life—his house—on the foundation of a rock.” And when the tough times come, that person stands.

If you notice, our culture is filled with a lot of weak people—people that are emotionally weak, people that can’t handle persecution, they can’t handle trial, they can’t even handle hard work these days. That is not a good sign in our culture. The—I mean, I got a lot of words for it—but the kind of pansy culture... Is that okay? The pansy culture we live in. Godliness has a strength. It has a kind of boldness—like a lion. And when you see that in the pages of the Scripture, I think you recognize, “Wow, that’s godliness right there.” The Bible says: you do what Christ says—you’re going to have that.

Now, there’s a lot of other benefits—and I don’t have any time for this—but if you want to take a few notes, you might want to jot down a few of these references real quick. I’m going to make you turn to this one if you do the questions on the back of the worksheet with your family, or you’re in a small group or home fellowship group at our church. The last text that I’ll turn you to—that I’ll make you think about and respond to, I’ll invite you to do that—is James chapter 1, which—if you’re thinking about Matthew—I’m sorry, if you’re thinking about Luke 6 and this distinction between hearing and just hearing, and then hearing and doing—then hopefully this verse is in your mind. And that is—you remember in James chapter 1—it says, “Don’t be a hearer of the word only, but be a doer of the word,” because if you’re a hearer of the word, there’s a lot of bad things that happen. He starts with self-deception. And then he goes on through all these things about the importance of looking intently at the truth that God has given us—he calls it “the law of liberty.” He says, “Persevere... and [do it],” and “the one who does [this] will be blessed in what he does.”

Now, here’s a principle that I know—because we are against the prosperity gospel, because we know that that’s a crock and it’s wrong—we sometimes miss the fact that there is some truth to the



principle of: obedience brings blessing. And we're not talking necessarily about the boat in the harbor—I get that. We're not talking about the house on the hill. But we are talking about a blessing that you and I should desire. It's a carrot that's hung out there: "If you obey me, there's good things that will happen." Not only will you have the fortitude and strength of the Apostle Paul, I trust, as you increasingly obey the Word of God, but there's all kinds of blessings to follow—"he will be blessed in what he does."

Now, any understanding of that principle—you'll see it everywhere in the Old Testament. Any thinking about obey and blessing—you'll see it everywhere. Let me give you a few psalms to write down, and maybe you can study these on your own:

Psalm 1—you know how that starts. If you are someone obedient to Christ—so, you're not walking in the counsel of the wicked; you're not standing in the way of sinners; you're not sitting in the seat of scoffers. Instead, you're all about the Word of God—delighting in it, meditating on it day and night—then he says he'll be like a tree—I know this is an analogy, but think about it—a tree that is planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season; its leaf does not wither; in all that he does he—do you know the verse?—prosper.

Psalm 24—and I'm just cherry-picking a few great ones—first of all, it reminds us in Psalm 24 at the beginning that the Lord is the CEO of the universe. And when you obey the CEO of the universe, who owns everything—"the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof"—everything is God's. When you obey him with a clean heart and pure hands, it says you'll "receive blessing from the LORD," or success—"such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob."

All I'm saying is: there's so much promise in the Bible about your life being a whole lot different when you choose to resist temptation and do what God asks you to do. And I understand we're dependent on the Lord and on the Holy Spirit. I'm just saying to you: when you choose this week, as the Old Testament says in Deuteronomy—choose life.

Psalm 91—listen to the cause-and-effect relationship here. The Hebrew text—very clear. Listen: because—this is God talking—talking about his servant—"Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him." Because he's holding fast to me—he's loving me (which is the definition of that, of course—"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"). "Because he loves me and holds fast to me, I'll protect him; because he knows my name." And again, there's the picture of that Hebrew concept of more than just head knowledge, but love, devotion. Because of that, verse 15 says: "When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him..."



That picture of the blessing of God related to obedience—sometimes because we watch the TV preachers abuse that so they can get rich off of people’s giving—I get what you’re saying here: that’s wrong. But the Bible says: you choose righteousness this week—there’s blessing involved in that.

Psalm 112—“Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments.” Actually both of our principles are in here—later in the psalm it says this—verse 7: “He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid...” Those pictures of the resilience of a life that delights in the commandments of God—everywhere.

Psalm 119—I mean, that will take you all afternoon—but there are a few psalms for you to dig through. And you want examples? They’re all over the place. Joshua—“Meditate on this; don’t let the law depart from your mouth; be strong and courageous; [you will] prosper... [have] good success.”

Uzziah—16 years old—2 Chronicles 26—he reigned in Jerusalem for 52 years, and “as he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to [his father’s pattern], and he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.”

Jotham—just spent time in 2 Chronicles this week—Jotham is 2 Chronicles 27:6: “Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God.”

Ezra—Ezra chapter 7—talks about him seeking: it says, “the good hand of his God was upon him because”—*for*—Ezra “had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it...” It’s all over the Bible. Benefits? Absolutely. A strong resilience, a different kind of life, a life prepared for anything. Obedience has its benefits—remember those. That’s an encouragement throughout the Bible.

That’s not how the sermon ends, I’m sorry to say. Verse 49 of Luke 6—he flips this on its head, and he says: “But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built his house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream rose and broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Maybe this will help to give you another little Greek insight here from the Greek New Testament. When you read the word in English “hear,” almost every single time you read that English word, the Greek word for it is *akouō*. That’s the verb—*akouō*—we get the word “acoustics” from it. That makes sense here. The word for “obedience”—what the Greek word is for that—sometimes this is helpful—*huper* (which is the word we transliterate “hyper”); *hyper akuo*. Interesting—*hyper akuo*. There’s a way to hear, and then there’s a way to hyper-hear. The way to hyper-hear is to hear it and do it. The difference between going to the movies and going to a management training seminar at your office; the difference between reading the news of Ukraine and sitting there on the tarmac as I give you instructions about how to rightly pull the ripcord on your parachute. There’s hearing, and there’s hyper-hearing. You say this to your kids: “Did you hear me? Did you really hear me?” What are we trying to say? “You better do what I tell you.”

Huper—that, by the way, in English comes across in all kinds of words—just a little side note. Or *hupo*—we talked about *hupo*, *hupomenē* (“under”)—*hupo* is a Greek preposition “under”—*hupo* (like hypothermia, your temperature’s too low). *Huper* is “hyper”—hyperactive (you’re too active). Hyper-hearing is: “I want to hear it and I’m ready to do it.”

That little difference will help you understand why I worded the third point the way I did.

Number three: We need to fear the costs of—here’s the word—passivity. There’s a way to passively hear what Jesus says; there’s a way to passively read your Bible; there’s a way to passively sit through a sermon; there’s a way to passively read a Christian book that accurately presents the truth of the Bible. There’s a way to read it and go, “Oh, that’s nice. That’s nice.” It’s the difference between going to some kind of orientation meeting—go back to my engineer at Fluor: he needs to learn how to do his job, so he’s got his orientation meeting as the new engineer at the corporation—and then going to the Verizon Amphitheater to go to a concert. Concert—all kinds of information coming at you; a movie—all kinds of information coming at you; you sit passively and say, “Pass the popcorn.” When you’re sitting there on the tarmac, getting ready to learn how to get out of an airplane successfully, you’re listening differently; you’re listening in an active way.

There’s passivity. In other words, to build your house without a foundation, all you have to do is—nothing. That’s a bit of the problem with the analogy in our own thinking because we think building is so active. That’s not the point. Passing is building—every day you’re building. The question is, are you building on the rock? To build on the rock you have to hyper-listen—you have to open your Bible and hyper-listen to it. That’s the word—obedience: you obey what it says. Two kinds of encounters with information. God asks us to be engaged—to do what he says. If you don’t, there are costs—and we’ve got to fear them.



Can I give you a couple real quick? One again—you will see this when you look up James chapter 1, and I've already quoted it: "Be doers of the word; don't be hearers only," because the hearer—if he only hears—he deceives himself. That's so important. You leave today—this sermon—just like every encounter with biblical data that you have, and you'll live your life. But because you heard the message and you spent time with biblical data this morning, you're subject to deception—to thinking that somehow that did something spiritually to you. And it doesn't. There's no passivity in this. Building the house without a foundation is deceptive because it looks like the house that has a foundation. The only difference is whether you apply it; and when you apply it. Now your life is different than the house that doesn't apply it.

Passivity is easy to do, and it's self-deceptive. So much about this in the Bible—1 Corinthians 8: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Love is a verb; love is the application of the information. John 5: "You search the Scriptures daily because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me; yet you refuse to come to me"—context—"and [do] what I'm telling you to do." You don't obey it.

Alright—just one passage on this, please. Let's wrap it up with this—Proverbs chapter 1. The text says—and it's all an analogy, and there's not a lot of words here to go with other than "the stream breaks against the house and it falls, and the ruin of that house was great." I don't know where that takes your mind, but that doesn't look good. Galatians says, "Don't be deceived; God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. The one who sows to the flesh will reap from the flesh"—do you know the word?—what's it translated?—"corruption." That's a bad word. But what does that look like? Let me give you some unpacking of that concept in Proverbs 1.

Now remember, I didn't write the Sermon on the Plain—you know that, right? You understand that? It ends with this concept and this thought. So if you're driving home going, "There's another sermon—I didn't feel encouraged today"—I didn't write this. I'm just telling you: he ends with a sobering warning, and sometimes sermons need to end that way. Let us end by unpacking what it might mean to have a life that, when the tough times come, the difficulties come—it breaks and falls and it's ruin.

Start in verse 20—Proverbs chapter 1, verse 20: "Wisdom cries aloud in the street." What is that? Personification of wisdom. Where do we find wisdom? God's wisdom is penned in the pages of Scripture—the prophets and the apostles have penned it. Christ affirms the prophets of the Old Testament; he sent the apostles of the New Testament; he himself added to the tenor of Scripture by speaking and having his words recorded. Wisdom—it cries aloud in the streets: "Hey! Listen!" In the marketplace she raises her voice. "Hey—do this!" "At the head of every noisy street she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks." What does she say? She says, "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?"—which is a nice kind of way to say what? "Simple?" You're being stupid; you're being rebellious. "Why do you live like the truth is not a part of your life?" "How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?" "If you turn at



my reproof”—my correction—“behold, I will pour out my spirit to you”—you’re talking about blessing—the blessing will come—“I will make my words known to you.”

“Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded; because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof”—then I will—this is harsh—verse 26—“I also will laugh at your calamity.” Think about this now—calamity. So if you look at the parenting instructions in the Bible about parenting and you say, “I don’t want to do that,” and everybody’s throwing paper airplanes around in the corner of the cubicles that you live in—the Boss walks in and says, “Raise your kids like this; here’s how you discipline; here’s how you...” And you mock that—you don’t do it; you don’t listen—Wisdom’s crying out—you don’t do it, and then things collapse. And the Bible says, when it does, Wisdom just laughs. “I will mock when terror strikes you; when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind...” You think Christ may have had this passage in view when he personifies what it is to not do what he says? There’s crashing involved: “distress and anguish” will come upon you.

See, when you don’t live your marriage according to the biblical principles and down the road there’s calamity and disaster... When you don’t function in your mind the way Christ said and eventually it plays out in your workplace, and there’s calamity and disaster—Wisdom’s gonna go, “I told you so.” It’s right here.

Verse 28: “Then they will call upon me”—think about this: my house just collapsed—“but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently”—“I want to know: what do I do? What does the Bible say? How do I fix it?”—“but they will not find me.” Why? “Because they hated knowledge”—that was their life; they skimmed through the web page of biblical data and they didn’t care—“and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and”—man, this is a big word—“the complacency of fools destroys them.”

Do you understand now why I had to use the word “passivity” in this? That word “complacency” in Hebrew is “quiet, restful”—just to sit; “Yeah, let’s hear that—that’s interesting.” That’s complacency. That’s the picture. The Hebrew is a picture of just sitting quietly—looking. “The complacency of fools destroys them. But whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without”—what’s the real motivation here?—“the fear of evil” (positively: “dread of disaster”).

“God is not mocked; don’t be deceived. Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. If you sow to the flesh, you’ll reap from the flesh corruption.” Want a commentary on that corruption? There—



you've got it—Proverbs chapter 1. You want to talk about what it means to have your house collapse because you refuse to listen to the truth of God and respond obediently? Well, here's a good picture of it.

We're bombarded with information. Not all information is created equal. But when God speaks in his Word—and the difficulty of responding to it with obedience—you're confronted with that, just remember this text. We obey him just because he is who he is. We know there are benefits, and we want those—not a bad motive (secondary motive), but it's not a bad one. But if none of that gets you, nothing wrong with fear as a part of the motivation—to say, "I don't want my life in the gutter; I don't want my life in the ditch. I'm gonna listen to what God says and do it."

Just stand with me as I dismiss us together with a word of prayer. Pray with me, please.

God, I know in a day that's much like Ezekiel's day there at the end of the southern kingdom—when the Babylonians were marching in and all the disaster was coming upon the people—Ezekiel was trying to warn them there in chapter 33. We know your word as you came and spoke to Ezekiel and said, "Well, the problem is: people listen to you like you're a romantic singer who plays well on an instrument. They hear your words, but they do nothing about it."

God, I pray that when we read the Word, we'd sit up straight. We would hear those words; we would seek diligently to apply them. Every time a biblical sermon is presented, we would have the kind of active hearing that would rise to that level of the word—*hyper akuo*—hyper-listening.

God, let us be obedient to your Word just because that's the right thing to do—not only that: you're the Christ that laid down your life for us. We love you; we respect you; we care about our future. All of those things should allow us, in a room—quote-unquote—a culture full of rebellion saying, "Let us cast off the fetters and the bonds and restraints of this God—we don't like his rules," should certainly recalibrate our thinking to say, "You know what? We've got to do what he says." The price tag's too high. He's too authoritative. He loves us too much for us to ignore what he says.

So God, make us obedient Christians. We know that's not possible without your Spirit's involvement in our lives—and that's another sermon—but it's still good just to mention the fact that we're not fighting this battle of temptation on our own. Let us draw strength from the indwelling Spirit in our lives this week—say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness at every fork in the road—as we remember what's at stake; as we remember the blessings that can follow; as we remember the fact that you, the Christ, are worthy as King of kings and Lord of lords.



Dismiss us now with a new resolve, I pray, to respond as the Bereans did—eagerly receiving the things that were taught, checking carefully to see that every sermon is actually biblical. Let us be more noble-minded than those that don't. In Jesus' name, Amen.