

What Is a Christian?

by Albert N. Martin

Albert N. Martin's sermon explores the essence of being a Christian, emphasizing obedience to God's commandments and faith in Jesus' testimony.

Duration: 47:08

Scripture: Psalm 119:59

Topics: "Christian"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commandments. He describes this obedience as evangelical, universal, purposeful, and persevering. The preacher urges the listeners to examine their own lives and determine if they are truly keeping God's commandments and holding to the testimony of Jesus. He explains that love for God and love for others are the foundation of obedience, and that Scripture provides detailed instructions on how to live out this love in various aspects of life.

Transcript

The question is this, what is a Christian? Now, the question is not how to become a Christian. Those are two different questions. By asking, what is an airline pilot, you would say something along these lines.

He is a man who sits at the controls of an airplane, directing and controlling the activities of that great, complex machine. Now, if I ask the question, how do you become an airline mechanic, that's quite an airline pilot, that's quite another thing. That's a long, long answer.

Now, the question is not how does one become a Christian. The question is, what is a Christian? We're not going to go to Scripture to describe the path by which one enters the narrow gate. Rather, we're asking, what does a man look like who's entered the gate and is on the straight and narrow way? Now, no answer would be completely comprehensive for the simple reason that a Christian is such a marvelous person.

You see, he is God's workmanship, according to Ephesians 10, the 210. We are his workmanship. And whatever God makes is so beautiful and many times so complex that you can't describe it in a simple phrase.

Rather, what Scripture does is give us a number of beautiful descriptions that approach the whole answer from a different aspect. So, in a sense, each one is complete in itself, and at the same time, each one contributes to the whole picture. So, we're going to look at a text of Scripture this morning that answers very succinctly and in a very real sense, very thoroughly, the question, what is a Christian? My mind was directed to these texts through our own reading of the Scriptures Sunday morning, for they came before us when we read chapter 12 of the book of the Revelation, and again last week when we read chapter 14.

Will you look with me, please, at Revelation 12, 17, and Revelation 14, 12? These two texts of Scripture are very similar, and almost arbitrarily we will settle upon the second of them, though we could just as well settle on the first. Revelation 14, sorry, Revelation chapter 12, we have the figure here in prophetic vision of the conflict between the dragon and the woman and her seed. And it says of that conflict, verse 17, the dragon waxed wroth with the woman and went away to make war with the rest of her seed.

Now, how does he describe the seed of the woman here? Two-fold description, that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. The woman here is the church. Her seed are the children of God, her sons and daughters, those who are brought into the church by the operations of grace.

They are described under this two-fold description, they keep the commandments of God and they hold the testimony of Jesus. Now, Revelation 14 and verse 12 describes another conflict, the conflict between the beast and the people of God, here called not the seed of the woman but the saint. Verse 12, here is the patience or the steadfastness of the saint, and who are they? They that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Now, in both of these texts we have these two thoughts. The seed of the woman, the saints of God are people who keep the commandments of God and who hold to the faith or the testimony of Jesus. What is a Christian? Here's your answer.

A Christian is someone who keeps the commandments of God and holds to the testimony of Jesus. Simple yet beautiful in its comprehensiveness, for you have on the one hand the objective mark of a Christian, he holds to the testimony of Jesus. That's what he believes with his head.

But he not only holds doctrine with the mind, he keeps the commandments of God. There is the subjective, there is the evidence of the renewed and the subdued heart. You have what he believes on the one hand, what he does on the other.

So with this text before us, and we'll be focusing upon 14.12 in particular, I want to press the question upon the conscience of every single one of you. Those of you concerning whom I personally have a relative degree of assurance are the children of God. Some of you who are visitors or strangers or whose spiritual condition I know little of.

It makes no difference. I'm addressing all of you this morning as I would address myself in preparation with this question. Do I fit that description? If I am part of the seed of the woman, if I am indeed a saint of God, then these two things are true of me.

I keep the commandments of God and I hold to the testimony of Jesus. Therefore, we dare not take lightly what these words mean. And so vital are they that we're going to spend our entire time this morning just with the first half, what it means to keep the commandments of God, and the Lord willing this evening,

what it means to hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Now let me emphasize before we dig into the first aspect, though we are splitting them up for the sake of study, they are never split up in the experience of a true child of God. There is no true holding to the faith of Jesus without keeping the commandments of God. There is no true keeping the commandments of God without holding to the faith of Jesus.

The seed of the woman, the saints of God, have both of these marks. These are the evidences of the work of God's grace in their hearts and in their lives. If we put them into our own language, what are these two marks? I suggest that they are, number one, obedience to the revealed will of God, and secondly, fidelity to the revealed truth of God.

Obedience to the revealed will of God, fidelity, this is faithfulness to a trust, faithfulness to a responsibility, fidelity to the revealed truth of God. Let's focus our attention this morning upon this first mark of the true Christian, obedience to the revealed will of God. John writes, saying, The seed and the saints are those who keep the commandments of God.

Two words need definition, keep and the commands of God. What does it mean to keep the commandments of God? The word used means something far more than mere external observance. It's a word which means to attend to something carefully, to guard or to hold firmly.

In fact, the soldiers who were set watch over the tomb of Christ were called the keepers of the tomb. The picture of a soldier guarding a place that has been marked off as no man's land, and he's told to protect it. That's the very strong word, its root word is used here.

So to keep the commandments of God is to have a relationship to those commandments which involves attending to them carefully, guarding or holding them firmly as a precious possession. Then what is the commandment of God in this context? I would suggest that an accurate definition is the clearly revealed expressions of his will for his creatures as found in the scriptures. The commands of God are the clearly revealed aspects of his will for his creatures found in this blessed book.

God the creator who has the right to command man, the creature, has taken advantage of that right as he did in the original creation, having made man, it says, he put him in the garden and he commanded him, saying, and then he gave him his orders to be fruitful and to multiply, to eat of all the trees but of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil and those other commandments. Now, more specifically, his commandments, of course, are embodied in a beautiful summary form in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not something originated upon Mount Sinai, they were the crystallization of the whole duty of man as God had revealed himself to man.

All those duties summarily brought before us in the Ten Commandments can be boiled down even further into two commandments. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, love thy neighbor as thyself. But now, since we must know what it means to love God and love our neighbor, we have not only the summary in the Ten Commandments, but we have a great detailed expression of what love to God will mean and what love to man will mean.

And we find that throughout the length and breadth of scripture, but particularly in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the teaching of his inspired apostles. When you come to a section like the Sermon on the Mount, ye have heard that it hath been said, but I say unto you, here is the details of your obedience in

every circle of life, your religious life, how to pray, how to fast, how to give, your relationship to governments, your relationship to your enemies, your relationship to other people. Our Lord touches all these areas, expressly setting before us what God desires his creature to do.

We find a similar thing in the epistles, where the apostle writes, as we have found in Thessalonians. He says, I have written to you how to walk and to please God. This is the will of God.

And then he tells them, your sanctification. And he deals with sexual matters. Then he deals with how they are to think about death.

Then he deals with their relationship to their pastors and elders. All of these expressions of the will of God are the commands of God. And when we come to a passage like Revelation 14.12, which says, a Christian is someone who keeps the commandments of God, is talking about this kind of relationship where a human being, touched by the grace of God, carefully attends and holds firmly to the expressions of the will of God as found in the word of God.

Now, so much for definition. Let me move to a description of this in some detail. If a Christian is one who attends carefully to, guards and holds firmly to the expressions of God's will as revealed in his word, then no one sitting in this building this morning has any grounds to claim he's a Christian if that's not true of you.

If looking at your life, one could not write of you so-and-so who keeps the commandments of God, who tenaciously clings to, adheres to, firmly grasps all the aspects of the revealed will of God which impinge upon life in all of its relationships, then you have no ground to claim you're a Christian for this is an indispensable characteristic of a Christian. And we dare not separate Christians into first-class, second- and third-class citizens of the kingdom. The first-class citizens keep the commandments, the second-class keep some of them, and the third keep very few or none of them.

No, no. All of the seed of the woman are described here as those who keep his commandments. All of the saints are described as those who keep the commandments of God.

Now, this is not just the teaching of an isolated text in the book of the Revelation. This is a summary of the entire witness of the word of God. For Jesus said in John 8.51, If a man keep my saying, same word, if he holds to, attends carefully to, guards and holds firmly to, if a man keep my word, he shall never see death.

Only those who keep the word of Christ will avoid the second death. Jesus delineates his friends in John 14.15 in the following words. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Indicating if we don't do whatsoever he commands us, we're not his friends. And if we're not his friends, we're his enemies. For he that is not with me, he said, is what? Against me.

There is no neutrality in our relationship to Christ. It's the teaching of 1 John 2, 3, and 4. Hereby do we know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that sayeth I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.

Oh, but I can just see all the questions just floating upward right now and just emblazoned in front. Ah, but wait a minute. None of us keeps them perfectly.

Yes, I know that. What about this and what about that? Look, before we deal with the qualifications and a more refined description of what it means to keep the commandments of God, will you let the weight of the phrase of Scripture itself have its influence upon you? If this is not a description of you, you have no grounds to claim you're a Christian. The seed of a woman, keep the commandments of God.

And you must never so qualify keep that it ends up meaning don't keep. Must never do it. All right then.

Since there is more to this than the simple statement they keep the commandments of God, I want to describe, I trust accurately, and getting into this area is one of the most difficult areas for the servant of God. For on the one hand, he does not want to overstate the case of Scripture, lest there be an unnecessary affliction of a tender conscience. But if he understates it, there will be a terrible, terrible salving of a deceived conscience and a deceived heart.

And may God assist me as I seek to steer between the whirlpool on the one hand and the rocks on the other in describing the nature and characteristics of that obedience which is the indispensable mark of everyone who's of the seed of the woman and a saint of God. In the first place, the basis of that obedience, what is it? It says they keep the testimonies, the testimony of Christ, and they keep the commandments of God. Now what is the basis of that obedience? And I would suggest to you that it is evangelical and not legal.

Now what do I mean by that? I was in a minister's meeting recently and I happened to use this phrase evangelical and not legal. And one of the ministers in the question period said, Mr. Martin, what do you mean by that? That the obedience is not legal. Do you mean it's illegal? Well, I said, I'm sorry, I've used some of the terminology of the old 17th century writers.

What I mean by legal is this. An obedience that is rooted in fear alone or merely has the hope of reward is legal obedience. That kind of obedience is always forced and characterized by bitterness of soul.

There is no delight in doing that for which there is no motivation but the fear of what will happen if I don't do it and the hope of some reward if I do do it. No evangelical obedience. The motives for this obedience spoken of by John in the book of the Revelation has love as its sub-soil.

For Jesus said in John 14, 21, He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. Verse 24, If a man love me, he will keep my words. Love then becomes the motivation for this obedience.

Certainly the saints of God keep the commandments of God but they do not keep them with an attitude that is permeated by the dread of punishment or the hope of reward, but they keep them because love has been kindled in their breath and love expresses itself in a desire to please its object. This is that love which is rooted in God's full and free forgiveness. We love Him, John says, because He first loved us.

It's that love to Christ which is the reflex action of our comprehension of His love to us. Seeing myself a sinner and a holy God loving me in Jesus Christ and comprehending and apprehending that love, the reflex action of the heart that lays hold of God's love to man is man's love to God. We love Him because as a consequence of His love to us.

To whom much is forgiven, Jesus said, the same loveth much. And so the basis then of that obedience which is the mark of a true Christian is evangelical in that it flows from love. Its motive is love.

Secondly, its spirit is the family spirit. To use the formal term, it's filial. It's the spirit of Galatians 4, 6. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

That is, when one is born of the Spirit, there is this consciousness of the Father-Son relationship which brings delight into the context of our obedience. Psalm 40 and verse 8, I delight to do thy will, O my God. Yea, thy law is within my heart.

The Spirit is not one of forced bondage, but of free delight because it's the obedience of Son. And therefore, in the third place, its climate is joy. First Corinthians 4, 20, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

This is the mark of the obedience of a child of God. Rooted in love, free in its spirit, its climate is joy. Now I ask you this morning, do you know something of obedience to God that is marked by those things? An obedience that knows something of love to God, something of this filial access of a son to the Father, of the daughter to the Father, and is carried out with joy, even the difficult part.

Our Lord spoke on the eve of His crucifixion praying that His joy might be in His people and that their joy might be full. I'm not talking about giddiness. The kind of joy that was brought before us this morning where with your face ashen white with the consequences of your obedience there's a sense of inward delight.

This is the will of God. And in it I rejoice. See? Do you know anything of that? That's the mark of someone who's of the seed of the woman and a saint of God.

They keep the commandments of God, the basis of that obedience, evangelical, not legal. Now, in the second place, what is the extent of that obedience? And I would suggest these words, it is universal and not partial. That is, the child of God respects all of the commandments of God, not just those that are easy to obey, convenient to obey, those that he knows will bring some personal reward in terms of his own name, his own skin, or his own reputation.

No, no. David expresses this beautifully in Psalm 119 and verse 128 when he said, I have respect unto all thy commandments. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.

Notice our text. They that keep the commandments of God. The general term is used.

There is an obedience that respects all of the precepts of God. It is universal and not partial. Now, does that mean that we actually perform to perfection all of his commandments? No, not this side of heaven.

But it does mean that the disposition of the heart is one of subjection to all the precepts, and when the precept is made known where it touches any area of life, there is no rest or peace until there is compliance of the heart with that precept in that specific area. The mark of the hypocrite is that he has marked out certain areas and said, no man's land as far as God's commandments are concerned. He marks out an area of his life and says, this area will be dictated by my own desires or opinions, and even God has no right to intrude.

That's the mark of the hypocrite who goes on professing faith in Christ, but has marked off certain areas and said, these are my areas. The commandments of God will not touch me here. And our Lord, aware that this was the state of the human heart, whenever he began to press the issue of the relationship of the soul to himself or to his father, he would zero in on that area of no man's land and then press his claim.

Remember the rich young ruler? What was his area of no man's land? His money. As far as his moral conduct was concerned, oh, I'll obey the commandments. As far as the use of his tongue, not bearing for, oh, I'll keep the commandments.

As far as his relationship to his parents, he said, that's fine. But he had one area that was marked out as no man's land. That was his money.

And what did the Lord do? The Lord quoted the commandments to him. He said, you know what to do until I keep the commandments. Which ones? And our Lord quoted the last six.

He says, all these things have I kept from my youth up. I haven't marked out any of those areas as no man's land. I'm willing for your commandments to direct me there.

The Lord says, wait a minute. I see an area of no man's land. And it's the area that involves your money.

Now my commandment is going to enter no man's land and I'm going to, as it were, plant the flag of my own will and purpose there. Go, sell that thou hast. Give to the poor.

And he commanded him in the area of his no man's land. And what did the rich young ruler do? It says he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. He said, no, I'll have respect unto God's commandments except at the point where it touches the area I've marked out for myself.

And that man went away as far as the record of Scripture is concerned, an unconverted man. And may have died in that condition. I don't know.

I can't speak with authority where Scripture is silent. Our Lord did this with the woman at the well. She's talking about worship.

What's the true place to worship? What does God's commandments say about worship? Our fathers said worship here. Your fathers say worship there. What is the commandment of God concerning the place of true worship? I'm willing to listen to that.

And the Lord said, look, you've got an area of no man's land. It's the area of your moral life. Go call your husband.

But Lord, I don't have a husband. He said, that's right. I know all about you.

You see, our Lord invaded the area of no man's land in that woman's life. And he said, I'm going to plant my flag there unless it's planted there. It's really not planted anywhere.

I ask you this morning, where's your area of no man's land? Where's the area where the commandments of God impinge upon your own appetites or natural desires or your own carnal thinking? The mark of a true Christian is his obedience, evangelical in its motive, universal in its scope. He has respect unto all the commandments of God. And he hasn't marked out any no man's land.

He said, Lord, I'm yours. You purchased me with your precious blood. As we saw in our study in the Bible class earlier.

My body is yours. In all of its faculties and appetites and potentials, mental and physical, all that I am, Lord, I want every area of life to be marked out by your holy precepts. The psalmist cried in Psalm 119 in

verse 133, Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

There's the mark of universal obedience. Be ye holy for I am holy. And the man whose heart has been brought subject to that command says, Lord, let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

I've not marked out any sin to be spared. I've not asked for any Delilah to be given a special room somewhere in the dark corners of my heart. I've not asked for any of those kings to be hidden off in some cave and den of my heart.

Lord, I want you to drag out all those kings and put your foot upon them and slay them as they did to the five kings of Makeda in the Old Testament. Is this the mark of your obedience? Can you say this morning with the psalmist, for this was his testimony, I have respect unto all thy commands. Lord, to the best of my knowledge, there's no area marked out, reserved, but all is open as before.

The third thing about that obedience which is the mark of a true child of God is this. In its nature, it is purposeful, though not perfect. The obedience which God demands of his creatures is perfect obedience, perpetual obedience, but the obedience which is the evidence of God's grace is not perfect and perpetual.

Thank God it will be that in the world to come. But Christ is the only one who rendered it here in the days of his flesh. He rendered to the Father perfect and perpetual obedience.

He could say, I do always the things that please my Father. You can't say that and I can't. But if you're a child of God, you can say this, I would always do the things that please my Father.

Just one word added. That's the difference between Christ and his people. He could say, I do always, and the child of God says, I would always do.

And we may at the point of our deepest conflict with sin have to say with Paul, I delight after the law of God with my inward parts, but I find another law warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity. But what was his problem? His problem was because he had a heart that was purposely set to do the will of God that would accept nothing less than obedience. That's the only man who has a conflict with corruption.

I read something from one of the old Puritans, Richard Sibbes, the other day in which he said, that which troubles the true man of God, the true child of God most, is that which troubles the world in the least, his indwelling corruption. You see, if you can say, oh, I don't obey the Lord perfectly, and say it without a sob, you've got no grounds to claim you're a Christian. For God has put the seed of perfection within you.

What he's begun is one day going to come to perfection as we saw in the class this morning. Body and soul will be completely rid of all the last vestiges of sin. And because God has marked you for perfection and put longings within for what you're going to be, that's what makes the true child of God at times downright miserable.

Because he has the seeds of what he's going to be already working within him, longing for its completion. Paul said, we that are in this body do groan. At times, if it is a groan, I long to be what God destined me to be.

But I'm not yet. That conflict is known by every child of God. Why? Because his obedience is purposeful, even though yet it is not perfect.

When we have done all, we have to say we are yet unprofitable servants. But this does not negate that our obedience is purposeful and pointed toward perfection. Listen as I read from several passages in the 119th Psalm, which is perhaps the greatest manual on the nature of a Christian's obedience.

Verses 59 and 60 of this lengthy psalm. Here's a man who's committed to a pathway of purposeful obedience. I thought on my way and I turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

I made haste and delayed not to observe thy commandment. I thought on my ways and I turned my feet. May I be very personal, and I trust, speak of things that fall within the scope of your memory.

In the past few Sunday mornings, most of you have been here, you have heard some of God's precepts. You've heard the Lord's word, which is said, admonish the disorderly, comfort the faint-hearted, support the weak. Have you made any serious attempts in the past two weeks to do that with anybody? Or was that just another sermon you've passed off? Have you thought on your ways and actually turned your feet to His testimony? I'm not saying has the opportunity arisen, but have you had any conscious relationship between the precept you heard and the purpose of your own heart with relationship to it? We heard a few weeks before that.

Know them that are over you and admonish you, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Have you thought to do that in a way that you never have before? This is what I'm talking about. That obedience which is purposeful is marked by a conscious attempt to regulate the life by the new light of the precept.

I fought on my ways, and I turned my feet unto thy testimonies, made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments. Verse 101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way.

Why? That I might observe thy word. He came into a situation where the word of God said, here's the path. Evil and the seducing power of sin said, this is the path.

And the psalmist was conscious of refraining himself, saying, I will not go there, lest in so doing I deny this. I refrained. I refrained my feet that I might observe thy word.

Have you been conscious of any refraining activity this past week? How about with your speech? The angry word was about to come out, and you remembered that phrase, maybe couldn't quote it perfectly, but you knew that it was Scripture. Let all bitterness and clamor and evil speaking be put away from it. Were you conscious of restraining your speech that you might keep that testimony of God? Is there of that which would provoke lust by the eye gate or the ear gate? Were you conscious of, if thy hand offend thee, if thine eye offend thee, cut it off, pluck it out? Were you conscious of refraining, turning away the eye? Any consciousness of this? You see, this is not something you take by faith.

This is not something you can experience vicariously, someone else for you. This is the language of a heart that has been brought under the mighty operations of grace in which there is a purposeful, though imperfect, obedience. Look at verse 106.

I have sworn and I have confirmed it that I will observe thy righteous ordinances. Here's a man who says, I'm committed to do the will of God, and he says, I've confirmed that commitment. And the man who's walking in a course of purposeful obedience will confirm it a thousand times over as he continually reminds himself, I'm here to do the will of God in every area.

We had an illustration of it this morning, and I say this not to praise Paul. This was the grace of God operative, but it's so real in this area. Here was the passage, Romans 13, that says something about the relationship of those in subjection to higher powers, reading it, being aware of the will of God.

There was no course. This is what God says. I have sworn that I would obey him.

Now I confirm it. If it means up on the ladder and the fellas tear me to pieces, so be it. Do we know something of that? Do we know that? I have sworn and confirmed it.

This is the mark of a child of God committed to the course of obedience, and he constantly vows before God that that is his purpose. Notice verses 111 and 112. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes forever, even unto the end. Here's a man who says, I take my wayward heart and I incline it. Other places he prays, Lord, incline me.

Here he says it's his activity. He inclines his own heart. And we could go on mentioning other passages in this passage, which indicate something of what I'm trying to convey when I say that the nature of the obedience of a true Christian is purposeful, though not perfect.

He seeks the precepts of God. He embraces them. He seeks to be conformed to them.

He clings to them in the midst of opposition. He longs, when he is deviated from them, that the Lord would bring him back into the way of obedience. The last verse of Psalm 119, I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

Seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments. Even in his lowest state of spiritual digression, when he feels he's gone astray like a sheep, he said, even there I can't forget thy commandments. I know that the only path of blessedness is back in the way of the shepherd's will.

So he says, Lord, seek me, bring me back. Purposeful obedience, though far from perfect. He had wandered, but the purpose invented his heart was that which brought him to cry as he did.

Now will you listen carefully. There's a fourth aspect of this obedience. It's not only evangelical in its motive, universal in its extent, purposeful in its nature, but it's persevering and not accommodating.

What do I mean by that? Well, if you look at the context of both of these texts of Scripture from which I read this morning, it's the context of obedience in the midst of great opposition. Here in Revelation chapter 12, it's the dragon, this evil power, persecuting the seed of the woman. But even in the face of persecution and opposition, they keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus.

Their obedience is not accommodating. It's not an obedience that is turned off and on in terms of the favorable climate in the world. In Revelation 14, it's the picture of the beast who puts his mark upon the hand and the forehead, indicating perhaps that godless way of thinking and that godless way of acting which will have, as we saw several weeks ago, economic implications.

Unless you take that mark and you think like the beast and act like the beast, you have your food supply cut off. In the midst of that, what do these people do? They keep the commandments of God. You see, their obedience is not accommodating.

It is persevering obedience. Obedience that risks death itself rather than to deviate from the precepts of God. Obedience that looks upon personal privation and personal loss as inconsequential.

For God is to be obeyed even if the creature must be trampled underfoot in that course of obedience. And then the last thing I want to say about that obedience, and I don't know how quite to state it because it hasn't crystallized in my own thinking to where I can put it in a phrase, but I'll try to state it. It is powerful and joyful as opposed to some kind of hopeless self-effort.

I don't know how else to explain it. I don't have better words than that, but let me tell you what I'm trying to say even though I don't have the best of words. And had there been less time pounding nails and more time to meditate and think through, I might have had a clearer way to state it.

But I hope I can clarify it in my explanation though my words haven't clarified it. The title that I gave to it hasn't been very clear. In the midst of these verses that we've read in Psalm 119, as one reads that psalm, he gets the whole idea that the psalmist was conscious of a power operative within him to enable him to keep the precepts of God that was not his own.

This was one of the aspects that so struck me as Paul gave his testimony to us in the prayer meeting room. You notice he used these words here when he spoke to us too. He said, As I was in this situation and knew what the will of God was, I found there was nothing else that I could do.

The power of God drove me in the way of obedience. I chose it, but there was a consciousness of the operation of a power other than my own. And may I suggest if you're a child of God, though at times you'll be more conscious of that power than others, if you're not conscious that there is some divine enablement carrying you through in your obedience, not perhaps conscious in the act of your obedience, all you may be conscious of is there's the precept, there's the path, I refrain myself from the way of evil, I choose to do the path of good.

But as you look back, there's a very, as it were, easy reflex action of saying, Thank you, Lord. That was your hand that did it. Thank you, Lord.

That was your power that was operative. There is no sense of self-congratulation that I have swept through and I have attained it. No, no.

There's been the consciousness that as you have worked out with fear and trembling your salvation, it's because God has been at work in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And that's what makes the obedience of a child of God in the midst of difficulty a joyous experience, for he has conscious communion with his God in the midst of his obedience and this is what brings the light even in the face of suffering and opposition. I would suggest this morning if you have been able to sit here and say, Well, I think I know something of that.

I believe I know something of what Pastor is speaking about. I would say without any fear of being contradicted from Scripture, no hypocrite can ever render this kind of obedience. That is evangelical in its motive, love to Christ, the free spirit of the Son in a climate of joy, that is universal respect unto all the commandments, that is purposeful though not perfect, that is persevering and not accommodating, that is joyfully endowed with the power and enablement of God as opposed to mere self-help.

No hypocrite can ever declare that that is the kind of obedience that he renders. And if by the grace of God you can say, Well, I believe I do know something of that. My friend, this is because God has been pleased

to work a work of grace in your heart.

But if you can't, if you've been able to face those things this morning and say, I don't know what he's talking about and are tempted to say, But I'm sure I'm a Christian. I remind you in closing of the instance in Pilgrim's Progress when as Christian hopeful walked along the way this man Ignorance came up to walk with him. And when they asked Ignorance how things were with his soul, he answered, I hope well, for I'm full of good motions that come into my mind and comfort me as I walk.

And as they began to examine his good motions and asked him, Upon what basis do you believe that you are saved? Here was his answer, My heart tells me so. Christian said, He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, ignorant. Oh, that's spoken of an evil heart, but mine's a good one.

Christian, how do you prove that? Because it comforts me in the hopes of heaven. And then they go on to press him. Ah, yes, but the standard must be the objective standard of the word of God.

He says, No, my heart tells me so. Everything must be all right. Christian, ask my fellow if I be a thief.

Thy heart tells thee so. Except the word of God beareth witness in this matter, other testimony is of no value. My friend, are you a Christian? Are you a Christian? Here's God's description of a Christian.

They who keep the commandments of God. Do you keep His commandments? In the sense that we've sought to explain it from Holy Scripture this morning. If not, don't comfort yourself you're a Christian because your heart tells you so.

If thy heart agrees not to the word of God, it is not to be trusted. But if in some measure, not the measure for which you long, these aspects of true obedience are true of you, then bless God for the work that He's begun and rejoice that the work which His goodness began, the work of His grace will complete and He will carry it on to perfection. The Lord willing, tonight we'll look at the second aspect of a true Christian.

He holds to the testimony or the faith of Jesus. Let us pray.

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