

Obeying Jesus

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of obedience to Jesus as a response to His grace and lordship in our lives.

Duration: 45:42

Scripture: Matthew 22:37-39, John 3:16, John 10:27, John 13:34, John 14:15, Acts 16:6-7, 1 Peter 1:1-2

Topics: "Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his own struggles and frustrations in ministry. He confesses that he has not been loving the people or seeking God's face when preaching. He realizes that he has been preaching without pouring his heart out and truly caring for the people. The preacher emphasizes the need for intimacy with Jesus and warns against turning the teachings of Jesus into a legalistic set of rules. He shares a story of a man from Iran who risks his life to preach the gospel and challenges the congregation to examine who their true king is, whether it be alcohol, money, or Jesus.

Transcript

Sometimes the deepest truths are hidden in verses that don't seem to stand out. Like John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. We know that verse has great truth in it.

How about this one? The Lord is my, I shall not, what? We know that verse. But sometimes hidden away in a passage is something that eludes you. It has eluded me.

I never saw it in such clarity as the last few days, so I want to share this with you. Look at the beginning of 1 Peter. It's his introduction to his letter, his greeting.

Peter, notice how letters were written back then. You said who wrote first. You're not at the end.

We put sincerely, or yours truly, or respectfully, and then our name at the end. There they put it at the beginning. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. I want you to notice who have been chosen is not in the Greek text. It's been added by the NIV translators, and like most other translations, because they believe it brings smoothness and picks up the thought of God's elect.

So let's look at that. Peter's an apostle. He's writing to the Christians who have been scattered out around the world to live for Jesus, and they're called God's elect, and they're strangers in this world.

Why are they strangers? Because heaven is their home. My citizenship is not in America. My citizenship is in heaven.

How many are with me? Say amen. So we obey the laws of the land that we're in, but our real citizenship and where we wanna go home to is heaven, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen, that's added, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Notice the Trinity is mentioned here.

Father, Son, and Spirit. Notice, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying or separating work of the Spirit, for what? For obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood, grace and peace be yours in abundance. Let's just focus on the part that I wanna do there, Vanessa, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, there's the Father and the Spirit, and now for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood.

This is not gonna take long, so I want you to listen. Peter here, when he describes Christians, and it can be said about all of us because all Christians are the same in this way, we are a product of a number of things that have happened to bring us here today, not just to church, but into faith, into the body of Christ, becoming sons and daughters of God. There's a lot here.

Some is very mysterious. There's a lot that is going into, like, I'm a Christian. Well, why are you a Christian? Well, there's a lot to that.

Paul, Peter says that we are Christians partly because, or mainly because, God has chosen us. We're elect, and then that brings us to this mystery that we have free will, and we're free moral agents, and we have to decide and make a choice, and the Bible says, choose you this day whom you will serve. As many as received him, he gave the power to become sons of God.

It's my choice, your choice, and yet, in another sense, God chose us. We're elect. Now, how God chose us and how God sees all this is hard to imagine because God is not subject to time, so when the Word says, according to the foreknowledge of God, that prefix, F-O-R-E, fore means before, but there is no before to God because God dwells outside of time.

He invented time. He created time, so God sees everything at once. If you want something to blow your mind when you're trying to sleep at night, just try to imagine how God sees everything at one time, the beginning, the end.

He sees it in a way we can't imagine. So, before you were born, way before you were born and shaped in your mother's womb, God knew you would be a Christian, and in some sense, he chose you. And although he chose you, you had to choose him to complete the package.

Now, how those two coexist, the Bible never says we're able to fathom that. We're elect, chosen by God, and yet, we chose Jesus. And both are true.

And some places in the Bible, it emphasizes the choosing, the election of God, God's sovereign choice of us. In other places, it just lays the responsibility before us. Will you come and receive Jesus Christ? Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Well, who's gonna come? Whoever chooses to come. But when they come, they're gonna find out that they were chosen by God. Someone says that when you get to heaven on the outside of the door, when you walk in, it's gonna say, whosoever will may come.

And then when we walk in, we look at the back of the door, it'll say, chosen before the foundation of the world. Him and I are happy that we're chosen by God and elected by God. Chosen by God.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they were not robots. Anyone who says humans become robots because of God's power and decree makes Jesus become a fool because why would he be crying over Jerusalem if Jerusalem wasn't chosen and couldn't come to him? If you're not serving the Lord today, it's because you don't wanna serve the Lord, not because the Lord doesn't want you. For God so loved the, he loved the whole world.

Now, what brings us to salvation? What brings us to this sprinkling of the blood of Jesus that cleanses us? The Bible says it's the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God through the sanctification, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. So when my dear sister was a little girl and she grew up in a Christian home, Karen, who just sang, did not grow up in a Christian home.

Karen right here. In her bedroom was an altar to Satan. She had been dedicated by her parents to Satan.

So that's a perfect example. She grew up in a Christian home, but for both of them to come to faith in Jesus Christ and for all of us to make it here today and have been born again, the Spirit was working with us. Come on, how many remember when he was drawing you and making you dissatisfied and convicting you of your sin? How many remember that, when you were convicted and you said, no, I need a Savior, I need this Jesus? And then the Spirit is the only one who can make Jesus real to us.

Otherwise, Jesus is just a concept. Without the Spirit's work, Jesus is just a name in the Bible, J-E-S-U-S. Some historical figure, but oh, when the Spirit works, you see him standing with his arms open.

You see him on the cross dying for your sins. You feel your sins. You feel your need of a Savior.

He draws you to him. He watches over you. How many know, except for the Holy Spirit, you and I could have all been dead by now or in jail.

Come on, somebody lift their hand here with me? Because only us and God knows how the Lord used the Spirit to protect us and bring us to that place of repentance. So Peter says, you're elect, you're chosen people, you're a holy nation, chosen by God, and the Spirit worked in you to bring you to this place. Salvation is of the Lord.

So what was the purpose of it all? That's all I wanna leave with you. Yeah, the Spirit works so we could be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. You see, if you're not a believer here today, that makes no sense to you.

What are you talking about? Why are you lifting your hands? Why are some of the choir members and I see people next to me weeping for joy. What's going on here? You don't understand. The Spirit keeps reminding us that our sins have been washed away and we're so happy that we don't laugh.

Real happiness is never expressed by laughing. Laughing has a place, but the deepest joy comes from what? It's expressed through tears. So the Bible tells us that the Spirit works and brings us to that place of being sprinkled by the blood of Jesus.

But I left out that other phrase. The Father chose us, the Spirit separated us. Sanctified means, in this case, separating us to the purpose of God and to the side of Christ.

Why? For obedience to Jesus Christ. The calling that's on your life is to obey Jesus Christ. That's the calling on you, brother, to obey Jesus Christ.

Because, brothers and sisters, everyone's obeying someone. If you are a little bit taken back by my phrase for obedience to Jesus, you know, I thought we're Christians by grace. We are, but we're not.

But God saved us by grace so that we would obey Jesus because he's our king. Jesus is not just son of God. He is Lord of all.

He is king of what? Kings. And everyone here in this building, you have a king. Oh, yes, you do.

You're obeying somebody right now. You're saying you're free. You're not free.

Of course you're not free. You're obeying someone. Someone's giving you orders.

Everybody here. Everybody in the world has a king, and God says the best king you could have is Jesus Christ ruling over your life and giving you instructions because kings in those days, here was the covenant that a king made with his people. I will protect you, and I will supply what you need, and what you rendered to me is obedience and loyalty.

I will be your king. I will protect you, and I will provide everything that you need. I'll take you through every difficult place you're in.

Now, your reciprocal part of it is you render me loyalty and obedience. You obey the king. Now, Israel in the Old Testament, they're like all of us.

They chose the wrong king. They wanted Saul for their king. He was taller by a foot, by a head, than everybody else in there.

Handsome, looked like just a real he-man kind of guy, a macho man. And then the Bible says they chose him as king, but that wasn't the one that God had for them. So they chose the wrong king like we have.

We all chose the wrong king. We chose pleasure. Pleasure was our king, and what dictated the way we lived was what brought us pleasure, but where did that get us? Got some of us in trouble.

Broke all of our hearts. It left us empty, but pleasure was our king, and we made decisions based on pleasure. Pleasure ruled just like Saul.

They chose Saul. Saul ruled over them, and what happened to Israel? They ended up bankrupt. They ended up messed up and hurt because they had the wrong king.

And then God gave them the king that they didn't want, but he turned out to be the best king you could ever have, David. But David was just a picture of Jesus. Jesus is the son of David.

King of kings, the one who has the right to rule over us, and when he rules over us, he doesn't hurt us. You think Jesus, after dying on the cross, you think he wants to hurt you now? How could that be? How would he give himself for us and then say, now I'm your king, I'm gonna hurt you? No, I'm gonna bless you and make you happy, but we've all been deceived that we named Saul the king. We can take extreme examples about that.

Somebody just, you know, shooting mainline heroin. I was dealing, when we first went in the ministry, my wife and I, it seemed like every week somebody was bringing in a heroin addict into the church to pray for them, and their life was controlled. They said they were free.

Oh, I don't want this Jesus. I don't want this church stuff. I don't want this Jesus.

I wanna be free. Free, free my foot. Heroin is your king, and when heroin calls you, you're gonna obey, or crack, or my dad for 22 years, alcohol, alcohol was his king.

When alcohol called him, he couldn't say no. It was his king. You obey your king.

You're obeying your king. Some are in for money. It's more subtle, and what you live for possibly here is money is your king, and when you have to make decisions and sacrifices, who's dictating everything is money.

Whatever pays the most, that's what you do. You violate your conscience. You risk your family.

You make horrible decisions. Why? Because your king drives you to do it. Pleasure, laziness, being accepted by the world, fitting in, being cool, being thought well of.

Everyone just, you know, I watch, you see the poor kids in the street, and all of that, looking, what's the newest fashion? How do you wear your pants? How big? How down? Sneakers, what's the new sneaker? What's the new look? What's the new everything? That's what's driving them. They have no direction. They're just watching their king tell them the next order.

So we're saved to have obedience to a new king, obedience to Jesus. Now notice here, as I wrap this up, the Bible does not say that we are saved, obedience to the law. Doesn't say that.

We're not under the law. What? You mean the law that God gave to Moses, we're not under that? No, we're not. Of course we're not.

Because everyone under the law is under a curse. Anyone who tries to obey the law to be accepted by God, you're under a curse now as you sit here and listen to me. If you're trying to be a good person to get accepted by God, you're under a curse, because you'll never be good enough to get accepted by God.

You gotta accept his king, Jesus, who died on the cross. And when you put your faith in Jesus, you are accepted by God, not because of what you did, but because of what Christ did. Come on, let's put our hands together.

Faith in what Christ did. That's the king, not success in the business world. Make a name for yourself, I gotta be somebody.

And that's just another king and he's gonna get you in trouble. All the wrong kings get you in trouble. I see people trying to make it, even in the gospel world, they're not listening to Jesus.

My wife and I have met dozens of them. They're not obedient to Jesus, they're obedient to their dreams. I have a dream.

God doesn't want you to have a dream. He wants you to get his will and do it. So, we're not under the law, of course not, because first of all, the law included things like this.

Honor your mother and father. And if you don't, you get killed. Do we practice that? There'd be nobody in church here today.

How many were at times growing up disrespectful to your mom and dad? Oh, and the rest, I'll give you another verse, liars will make their place in the lake of fire. A lot of you can't get your hand up, you were disrespectful. I think everyone's disrespectful to their parents growing up, am I right? We've all made mistakes.

So, we're not under the law of Moses. What does that mean? Well, first of all, we can eat pork. We don't have to look at what fabrics we have.

That's all part of what God gave Moses. We don't kill animals here. God gave that command in the law.

Every morning, every night, you kill a lamb. And then you bring sin offerings. Do we do that? Is it in the word? Yes.

Are we to do it? No. We don't celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. We don't do a lot of things that are in the Old Testament.

Why? Because we're not under the law. God gave that to Israel. And all it ever does, the law, even the Ten Commandments, is show you how sinful you are.

The law was never meant to save anyone. The law just brings out how hopeless we are. So then, Pastor, what are you saying? What law are we under? We're under the law of Christ.

As Christians, not in order to become Christians, but since we are Christians, we now follow the teachings of Jesus. What does the Bible say? That my son James was saved by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. He was chosen by God, having nothing to do with that Carol and I were his parents.

Why? So that he would obey Jesus. Now, in the teachings of Jesus and in the writings of his apostles in the New Testament, that's the law that we're under. And if you study it carefully, you'll find out that all Ten Commandments are in the New Testament except for one, honoring the Sabbath.

Sabbatarianism is not in the New Testament. Days don't matter to us. We don't make a big thing about Saturday.

We don't make a big thing about Sunday. You should have a day of rest, but the real rest the Bible talks about is the rest that we have in Christ. The Sabbath was just a picture of that we can cease from our labor and we can rest in Christ.

But all the rest of it about coveting, adultery, fornication, stealing, killing, that's all taught under the teachings of Jesus, and that's who we're obedient to. We're not obedient to Moses, we're obedient to Jesus. Unto obedience to Jesus Christ, not to Moses, not to the law.

Ah, but you say, oh, does that make it easier? Oh, no, no, there's a lot more when you read the New Testament. Because now, the law just said don't commit adultery, but the New Testament says, Jesus said, if you look at a woman and you focus in on her in some lustful way, and that's what pornography's about, you sin even though you never touch the woman. And the Bible says, thou shalt not kill, but if you get so angry at someone and you harbor that, you're getting so angry you're guilty of murder, though you never lift your hand to them.

Oh, no, the teaching of Jesus is way deeper. The Old Testament never has stuff about the tongue in it, Proverbs touches on it, but oh, the tongue, all the warnings about slander, gossip, that's the law that we're under, the teachings of Jesus. Not in order to be saved, but because we are saved.

So, we're obedient, this is the calling on all of us, we're to be obedient to Jesus. Well, how can you be obedient to someone unless you know what they want you to do? So, born again Christians are pulled by the Holy Spirit toward the word of God, because what we wanna know is what does Jesus say we should do? Because unless he tells us what we should do, how would you obey him? Now, after he died on the cross and he gave himself for us, you don't wanna know how he wants you to live? You don't care? You don't care, in other words, you want the cross, but you don't wanna obey him, then I doubt whether you're a Christian. Because if you're truly born again, you love him, even though we haven't seen him, and you wanna obey him.

If making him happy is to obey him, if obeying him makes him happy, wouldn't you wanna make Jesus happy? How many wanna make Jesus happy here? Well, you say, yeah, but I love to praise him, and praise brings him joy. Yeah, but this is the truth now. In all kinds of churches in America today, people will be getting into the vibe of the music and lifting hands and worshiping, and they'll go out and disobey Jesus the other six days of the week.

And ministers will preach sermons and then live a double life. So what we do in church is not the ultimate way to please Jesus, it's to obey him. We're called unto obedience to Jesus Christ.

If you love me, keep my commandments. What are his main commandments? Love one another, which the Old Testament doesn't speak too much about, touches on it, but the New Testament is full of it, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another, and to trust him. The main two things that Jesus taught people was to love one another and to trust him, to honor God and all those other teachings, don't worry, don't be afraid, fear not, little flock, all those teachings.

So then, the closer you get to Jesus, then you say, oh, wow, I've been hurting him because I've been living in fear, and he says, fear not, and I'm called to obey him. So you would think, if we loved Jesus so much, we'd be studying this book all the time to find out what are the things Jesus says so that we can obey him? How does he want me to relate to other people? What's he want me to do when I get hurt? If I'm invited to a party, does he have any commandments about where I should sit? He does. How does he want me to treat children? This is the calling on everyone's life, and this is why a lot of Christians are missing the peace and joy and know nothing of the power that God wants to flow through them because they're in no man's land.

They claim the cross and they claim salvation, but then when it comes to obedience to Jesus, which Peter says, this is what you were saved for, chosen by God, sanctified and drawn by the spirit, why? To obey Jesus Christ. Why when, I mean, everyone has a king. So wait a minute, I'm gonna claim Christ on the cross as my savior, but during the week, I'm gonna serve another king.

No, that doesn't sound right. I wanna serve Jesus. How many here wanna serve Jesus and obey him? Serve him means obey him.

We can get very religious about that phrase. You know, I wanna serve him. What does that mean? Peter breaks it down and says to obey him.

So obey him is to find out what he says and what he wants and it's always good for us. In other words, any command Jesus gives us, some of you are already feeling like, oh, I don't like to hear that. I want my salvation, but I wanna be free.

No, you've been bought with a price, not with silver or gold. It cost Jesus his blood to purchase us from that old life with all those other kings. Haven't we had enough bad kings to know that Jesus is the king we need to follow? We're all gonna obey somebody.

So who you gonna obey? You gonna obey yourself, your flesh? You gonna obey the world, let the world dictate to you? Like be hip and like, you know, like where is it at? You gonna follow your desires or your flesh? You gonna let the devil, there's the world, the flesh, the devil? You know, when people get demon possessed, that's the ultimate kingship of Satan in a person's life. He uses their mouth, he's got total control, and it's the imitation, of course, of what Christ wants for us, that we're totally under his control, 24-7. Past simple, could anyone live like that? I don't know about that, but listen, that's what we should aim at.

That's why the Spirit was given. God wants to help us live lives obedient to Jesus. Now, here's the problem with that, brothers and sisters, as I close.

You say, I get that, past simple, I can't disagree. You're on biblical grounds. I have to live obedient to the teachings of Jesus, and I wanna do that more, I wanna do that more.

So then we study our Bibles a little bit more, and we learn more about Jesus, and then we say, God, now help me. Remember, whatever Jesus commands us to do, he is under obligation to give us the good news. He is under obligation to give us the grace and the power to do it.

He never says, do it on your own. He says, no, will you agree, will you submit to me? You will? You wanna love one another? Good, I'm gonna pour my love in you. I'm gonna help you.

In other words, we're not on our own. But the problem with that is, it becomes very old and very legal. Jesus is no longer a living reality.

We're now following precepts that we have in a book with a black cover. And then we struggle. Man, the more I read it and the more I say I wanna do it, the less I do it.

I know what it says. It says that when somebody slaps you, turn the other cheek, I know that. But man, I can't do it.

Somebody just said something to me, and I was up in their grill in a second. And I know I shouldn't have done that. How many are with me on that so far? Amen.

Well, here's the problem. Just like the law of Moses could get engraved on a stone, the teachings of Jesus, if we're not careful, becomes another kind of outside law, and we lose intimacy with Jesus. And instead of Jesus speaking to us and us obeying the promptings and the revelation we get as we study the word, it's not ink on a page.

It's as I read it, Jesus is speaking to me. And I hear his voice in my heart. Do not be misled.

Bad company corrupts good character. And suddenly the Spirit speaks to me, and I realize I'm convicted. I'm hanging out with people who are pulling me down.

And it's not some word on a page. It's Jesus speaking to me. Now, not only is there that, this Bible is the sum of the teachings of Jesus.

Nothing will ever be added. There's no new doctrine, no new revelation anyone will ever have. This is the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament, the Gospels, and then his apostles in the New Testament.

We have everything we need to know what pleases him. Not in order to become a Christian. We're Christians because we put our faith in Christ.

But now we wanna live lives that please him, because how ungrateful would it be that? Yeah, I want your blood and all your suffering on the cross, but then goodbye, because I got my own thing to do. I mean, that's like ugly. I gotta follow my dream.

So, in the New Testament, obedience to Jesus meant something else. It not only meant his teachings and his precepts and the moral commandments he gives us, that we're under that law of Christ, the law of love, but Jesus died and rose again, and Jesus is not dead, he's alive, and Jesus is still speaking. Jesus is still speaking.

And not too many Christians are listening, and when he does try to speak, not too many obey him. Many do. What do you mean, pastor? What I mean is, he's already spoken his moral precepts.

We already know what he teaches about how we ought to live, but Jesus is not dead, he's alive. He's speaking personal words to people at all times. He's directing things in our lives, and he's saying things that he wants us to submit to.

They are sometimes warnings, they're encouragements. And to be a follower of Jesus means to keep your ear, the ear of your heart open, so that when he speaks, you obey. Because that's what we're called to.

And the moment you and I start not listening and we start disobeying when we do hear what he says, now the whole thing starts to crumble. And we know, where's my joy, where's my peace? I gotta get on a prayer line, have somebody pray for me. Somebody gotta rebuke this spirit of depression.

But the reason you're so down is you're not listening and you're disobeying the voice of Jesus, and our calling is, we're called to obedience to Jesus Christ. Not just some precepts 2,000 years ago. Yes, that, by the help of the Spirit.

But right now, today, Jesus is speaking. He's speaking to some of you right now, and you don't even know he's speaking to you. Let me help some of you.

And I've asked God to lay this on me so that I could apply it in a way that will be constructive to you. When the Apostle Paul became a Christian, he went from Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the church, to this believer. And at first, people didn't believe that he was even a Christian.

And he ended up in a place in Syria called Antioch. And he was in the church there with a buddy named Barnabas. And there were other leaders in that church.

And suddenly, in the middle of a meeting, as they were fasting and worshiping the Lord, Jesus, speaking through the Holy Spirit, said, separate me, Paul and Barnabas, to the work that I've called them to do. Jesus expressed his will through the Spirit and said, separate me, Paul and Barnabas. Now, that's not a precept like love one another and be humble.

This is something very personal, very specific, very time-sensitive. Separate me, Paul and Barnabas, to the work that I've called them to do. And they, being Christians, and called to obedience to Jesus, when Jesus said, separate them and send them out on a trip that I've planned for them, what else could they do but say, yes, Lord? Because if they would have said, no, Lord, could you imagine them living victorious Christian lives after you say no to Jesus's direction for your life? Listen to me now.

A lot of people have trouble serving the Lord because Jesus has said something to them and they say, no, I won't do that, but I don't want all hell to break out in my life, so keep me under control, but I'm not doing what you said. You think that's a good way to live? I don't think so. I've tried it.

I didn't wanna go in the ministry. And when Jesus began to make real to me that I was called to, I had 1,000 excuses and I fought like a lion against him. But I found out that by saying no to him, I could barely survive as a Christian.

I couldn't even live as a Christian, why? You can't do deals with Jesus. And isn't there somebody here today, and that's what Jesus is saying? Jesus is saying, I've called you out of where you are to do something for me, but because of fear or selfishness or insecurity, you're not doing what I called you to do. So let's not talk about anything else because we gotta settle this.

Will you obey me? I died for you, I gave my life for you, and now you're gonna turn your back on me? I brought you into my family, you're gonna be a disobedient child? No, Paul and Barnabas said, is that what Jesus wants? We're obedient to Jesus. Later on in the 16th chapter of the book of Acts, Paul wanted to go somewhere to preach the gospel, and the Bible says the spirit of Jesus forbid him to go to that spot. Is that a moral teaching of the Bible? No, it was Jesus talking to Paul and saying, don't go there, why? I'm not giving a reason, don't go there.

That's not my plan for your life. Isn't Jesus speaking to some of you even this week? You heard warnings, don't go there, don't get involved in that. Don't go to that party, don't go to that club.

That Jesus never spoke to anybody in this building like that. He never said, don't get involved with those people. He never put a word of warning and a hindrance before us out of love to keep us from trouble.

But we go through those red lights and those alerts. We're not living with this goal of obeying Jesus, not 2,000 years ago Jesus, Jesus today, he's alive. Come on, let's put our hands together, he's alive.

That wasn't just your conscience, that was Jesus. He speaks through a still small voice, he can speak through a child, he can speak in a dream, he can speak in a vision, he can make you feel uncomfortable. That's Jesus, he's alive.

And the best life you can live is just speak, Lord, your servant is listening. And I want to obey, give me the grace to obey you. In the 18th chapter of the book of Acts, Paul is in Corinth and he's been beat down pretty bad in a couple cities, almost died on his first missionary trip in Lystra, they stoned him, left him for dead.

And now he's in Corinth and his nerves must be getting bad. And the Bible says, Jesus appeared to him at night and said, don't stop, don't be quiet, keep doing what I called you to do, for nobody will touch you in this place. I'm gonna put protection around you.

Here's the part I want you to focus on. Jesus appeared to him, to the apostle and had to encourage him, don't stop what I called you to do. Don't tell me there's nobody in this building? You've been tempted to give up what God called you to do? Working with children, the prayer band, in the choir, I'm getting too old, I'm too tired, the kids, it's hard.

That's what your natural body and mind are saying. But what is Jesus saying? You can't leave a ministry unless Jesus tells you to leave it. You're not working for a church, you're working for Jesus.

I've watched this with the pastors, people who leave ministries without praying, no direction from Jesus, they just get tired. You know how many of them I've seen get in trouble? No, I'm gonna get involved someday in another ministry. What ministry do you feel called to? I don't know, I'm just gonna chill for a while.

Oh, they chilled all right. Obedience to Jesus. Somebody is here today and you're a little bit tired in your nerves and your patience, I say this to you, Rosemary, in the name of the Lord, don't give up what God called you to do.

I don't care how dangerous it is, how hard it is, you gotta obey Jesus. He's saying to somebody here today, don't stop what I called you to do. Forget your age, forget your lack of qualifications, do it.

Just like he calls some people away to start something new, he encourages us to keep doing it. And Jesus not only wrote to people, but he wrote to churches, the living Jesus, not doctrinal. It's not doctrinal, it's no addition to the Beatitudes.

But Jesus saw a church in Ephesus and he said, you know what, I know your hard work and your labor, and I know that you're sound doctrine and you don't permit other people to come in and teach false things, but I have this against you. You've lost your first love. You've departed from your first love.

Repent and go back and do what you used to do because the shine has come off of your relationship with me. You mean to tell me there's nobody in this room that Jesus might be saying, look, I see you in church, I see all of that, I commend you for it, I see how faithfully you tithe, but you know what? It's not like it used to be between you and me. You used to open your word every day, you used to spend time with me, and now what, what are you, like more mature? You're so busy, you have no time for me? That's how Jesus talks sometimes to people.

For their own good. And we just make it into verses and we never open our ears to hear a personal word. Years ago when I first went to the, started here at the Brooklyn Tabernacle and there were less than 20 people on a Sunday and two or three people on a Tuesday night.

After about four or five months on a Tuesday afternoon with less than \$5 in the checking account of the church and my wife and I both working second jobs to survive, I was pacing up and I can see myself so young on 543 Atlantic Avenue, this little rundown building we're in, I see myself walking back and forth in front of the altar at 3.30 in the afternoon, no one's in the building, and that night I knew if five people came, it would be great. And I'm walking complaining about some things that happened and people who said they would be faithful or come to church and they don't, and then they say they would help and they don't, and I'm walking back and forth and overwhelmed and I never went to seminary and all this stuff is on me. And I said, Lord, you gotta speak to me and show me what to do.

And Lord Jesus took me up on that. He said, I'll tell you something right now. I'll tell you the biggest problem in the church, you.

You. You don't love the people. You're not seeking my face.

And when you preach, you don't pour your heart out to the people. You're just trying to get through another sermon. You don't care about the people.

I died for them and you're just preaching in the air. I fell on my face. I don't know how long I stayed on my, I remember my tears wetting the carpet there.

Just weeping. But you think Jesus said that to hurt me or to help me? To help me. He doesn't, when he cuts out a cancer, when a surgeon cuts out a cancer, no one says, how dare you cut my skin? They say, get it out.

And his word will do that. To another church of those seven, Jesus said, I know this about you. You have a name that you're alive, but I know you're dead.

Maybe that's to be applied by the Holy Spirit to someone here today. Jesus is saying, I know your reputation and I know your appearance, but inside you're empty, you're dead. You're an empty suit.

See, that's the living word, prophetic living word of Jesus to us that we're to listen to and obey because then now you're gonna walk in power, joy. Are you kidding? When you listen to Jesus and obey him, there's a peace that none of us even know about that exists. It's just for people who will listen and obey.

That peace will settle. Why we have a lot of turbulence is because he's saying things and we're in denial. We're blocking it out.

Some of you right here today, you're blocking out even what I'm saying now. You say, that's not for me. You know, Jesus is for drug addicts and degenerates and I'm basically a good person.

Oh, may God have mercy on you and wake you up today. He has some important things to say to you. To the last church he wrote, you know, again, not doctrine, it's a word to that church and maybe it's a word to someone here.

You're not hot, you're not fervent, but you're not cold. It's not like you don't believe in me. You're not hot, you're not all out for me, you're not crazy for me, you're not radical for me, but you're not cold either.

You believe in God, you know the doctrine. You're in between, you're lukewarm and because you're lukewarm, I'm gonna vomit you out of my mouth because if Jesus is real, we gotta be hot and fervent in our service of him. Lo, he ends, I stand at the door.

Here's another word from Jesus for somebody here today. I've asked God to give it to me prophetically so that it could be applied to your life, prophetically in the sense not predicting, but speaking God's heart to us because he loves us. I stand at the door and I knock.

Anybody in there, my people? If you just open the door, I'll come in and have fellowship with you. Isn't that a word for somebody here? Jesus is saying, when are we gonna have fellowship? When are you gonna just sit in my presence and open my word and hear what I wanna say to you? That's why you're lukewarm. You're lukewarm because you don't give me access.

Chosen by God, that's what we are. Separated by the Holy Spirit so that we could be part of God's family. Why? So that we could have a new king and we could obey that king, Jesus.

I haven't like I ought to in my life. I wanna obey him. I wanna obey every prompting.

I wanna obey everything that he gives me. Man came on a seven-hour layover at Kennedy. A man came on Friday and asked to see me.

We've talked on the phone. And he has this interesting ministry. He was, his parents and grandparents were Christians in Iran, Iran.

And now he works this organization. Ravi has told me about it. They work with the underground church in Iran.

You, if, punishable by death if you invite a Muslim to a church, you die. And yet the Lord said, preach the gospel. So what do you do? They meet underground.

And he came to me and he said, listen, people have read your books. People know your experiences, your failures, blessings God's given you. Would you come to Turkey at the end of the year? Istanbul.

We're gonna pull out 50 underground pastors. Some of them that we wanted to invite are already in jail now with no charges and they'll never know if they get out. Would you come and pour yourself into them? So now I have to ask Jesus, Jesus, is that something you want me to do? I cannot go to every invitation.

Not every invitation I get is of Jesus. And Jesus spoke to me and said, you go. 50 believers, 100 leaders, whatever they're gonna have.

And then life becomes simple. I don't have to worry, I don't have to fret. I just have to say Jesus.

Should I talk now? Should I end the sermon now? How should I end this sermon? Just be obedient to Jesus. If you open your ear, he will talk to you. Not only learning his teaching and having him speak through the word but giving us directions every day.

Let's close our eyes.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24109.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/obeying-jesus/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net