

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ODEIENGE OF FAITH.

A Sermon

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“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” – Hebrews xi. 8.

THE part of the text to which I shall call your attention lies in these words, “*By faith Abraham obeyed.*” Obedience – what a blessing it would be if we were all trained to it by the Holy Spirit! How fully should we be restored if we were perfect in it! If all the world would obey the Lord, what a heaven on earth there would be! Perfect obedience to God would mean love among men, justice to all classes, and peace in every land. Our will brings envy, malice, war; but the Lord’s will would bring us love, joy, rest, bliss. Obedience – let us pray for it for ourselves and others!

“Is there a heart that will not bend
To thy divine control?
Descend, O sovereign love, descend,
And melt that stubborn soul!”

Surely, though we have had to mourn our disobedience with many tears and sighs, we now find joy in yielding ourselves as servants of the Lord: our deepest desire is to do the Lord’s will in all things. Oh, for obedience! It has been supposed by many ill-instructed people that the doctrine of justification by faith is opposed to the teaching of good works, or obedience. There is no truth in the supposition. We preach the obedience of faith. Faith is the fountain, the foundation, and the fosterer of obedience. Men obey not God till they believe Him. We preach faith in order that men may be brought to obedience. To disbelieve is to disobey. One of the first signs of practical obedience is found in the obedience of the mind, the understanding, and the heart; and this is expressed in believing the teaching of Christ, trusting to his work, and resting in his salvation. Faith is the morning star of obedience. If we would work the work of God, we must believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Brethren,

we do not give a secondary place to obedience, as some suppose. We look upon the obedience of the heart to the will of God as salvation. The attainment of perfect obedience would mean perfect salvation. We regard sanctification, or obedience, as the great design for which the Saviour died. He shed his blood that he might cleanse us from dead works, and purify unto himself a people zealous for good works. It is for this that we were chosen: we are “elect unto holiness.” We know nothing of election to continue in sin. It is for this that we have been called: we are “called to be saints.” Obedience is the grand object of the work of grace in the hearts of those who are chosen and called: they are to become obedient children, conformed to the image of the Elder Brother, with whom the Father is well pleased.

The obedience that comes of faith is of a noble sort. The obedience of a slave ranks very little higher than the obedience of a well-trained horse or dog, for it is tuned to the crack of the whip. Obedience which is not cheerfully rendered is not the obedience of the heart, and consequently is of little worth before God. If the man obeys because he has no opportunity of doing otherwise, and if, were he free, he would at once become a rebel – there is nothing in his obedience. The obedience of faith springs from a principle within, and not from compulsion without. It is sustained by the mind’s soberest reasoning, and the heart’s warmest passion. The man reasons with himself that he ought to obey his Redeemer, his Father, his God; and, at the same time, the love of Christ constrains him so to do, and thus what argument suggests affection performs. A sense of great obligation, an apprehension of the fitness of obedience, and spiritual renewal of heart, work an obedience which becomes essential to the sanctified soul. Hence, it is not relaxed in the time of temptation, nor destroyed in the hour of losses and sufferings. Life has no trial which can turn the gracious soul from its passion for obedience; and death itself doth but enable it to render an obedience which shall be as blissful as it will be complete. Yes, this is a chief ingredient of heaven – that we shall see the face of our Lord, and serve him day and night in his temple. Meanwhile, the more fully we obey at this present, the nearer we shall be to his temple-gate. May the Holy Spirit work in us, so that, by faith – like Abraham – we may obey!

I preach to you, at this time, obedience – absolute obedience to the Lord God; but I preach the obedience of a child, not the obedience of a slave; the obedience of love, not of terror; the obedience of faith, not of dread. I shall urge you, as God shall help me, in order that you may come at this obedience, that you should seek after stronger faith – “For by faith Abraham obeyed.” In every case where the father of the faithful obeyed, it was the result of his faith; and in every case in which you and I shall render true obedience, it will be the product of our faith. Obedience, such as God can accept, never cometh out of a heart which thinks God a liar; but is wrought in us by the Spirit of the Lord, through our believing in the truth, and love, and grace of our God in Christ Jesus. If any of you are now disobedient, or have been so, the road to a better state of things is trust in God. You cannot hope to render obedience by the mere forcing of conduct into a certain groove, or by a personal, unaided effort of the resolution. There is a free-grace road to obedience, and that is receiving, by faith, the Lord Jesus, who is the gift of God, and is made of God unto us sanctification. We accept the Lord Jesus by faith, and he teaches us obedience, and creates it in us. The more of faith in him you have, the more of obedience to him will you manifest. I was about to say that that obedience naturally flows out of faith, and I should not have spoken amiss, for as a man believeth so is he, and in proportion to the strength and purity of his faith in God, as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, will be the holy obedience of his life.

That our meditation may be profitable, we will first think a little of *the kind of faith which produces obedience*; and then, secondly, we will treat of *the kind of obedience which faith produces*; and then we will advance another step, and consider *the kind of life which comes out of this faith and obedience*.

I will be as brief as I can upon each point. Let us look up to the Holy Ghost for his gracious illumination.

I. First, consider THE KIND OF FAITH WHICH PRODUCES OBEDIENCE. It is, manifestly, *faith in God as having the right to command our obedience*. Beloved in the Lord, you know that he is Sovereign, and that his will is law. You feel that God, your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer, and your Father, should have your unswerving service. We unite, also, in confessing that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. The Lord our God has a right to us which we would not wish to question. He has a greater claim upon our ardent service than he has upon the services of angels; for, while they were created as we have been, yet they have never been redeemed by precious blood. Our glorious Incarnate God has an unquestioned right to every breath we breathe, to every thought we think, to every moment of our lives, and to every capacity of our being. We believe in Jehovah as rightful Lawgiver, and as most fitly our Ruler. This loyalty of our mind is based on faith, and is a chief prompter to obedience. Cultivate always this feeling. The Lord is our Father, but he is, “our Father which art in heaven.” He draws near to us in condescension; but it is condescension, and we must not presume to think of him as though he were such a one as ourselves. There is a holy familiarity with God which cannot be too much enjoyed; but there is a flippant familiarity with God which cannot be too much abhorred. The Lord is King; his will is not to be questioned; his every word is law. Let us never question his sovereign right to decree what he pleases, and to fulfill the decree; to command what he pleases, and to punish every shortcoming. Because we have faith in God as Lord of all, we gladly pay him our homage, and desire in all things to say: “Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven.”

Next, we must have *faith in the rightness of all that God says or does*. I hope, beloved, you do not think of God’s sovereignty as tyranny, or imagine that he ever could or would will anything but that which is right. Neither will we admit into our minds a suspicion of the incorrectness of the Word of God in any matter whatever, as though the Lord himself could err. We will not have it that God, in his Holy Book, makes mistakes about matters of history, or of science, any more than he does upon the great truths of salvation. If the Lord be God, he must be infallible; and if he can be described as in error in the little respects of human history and science, he cannot be trusted in the greater matters. My brethren, Jehovah never errs in deed, or in word; and when you find his law written either in the ten commandments, or anywhere else, you believe that there is not a precept too many, or too few. Whatever may be the precepts of the law, or of the gospel, they are pure and holy altogether. The words of the Lord are like fine gold, pure, precious, and weighty – not one of them may be neglected. We hear people talk about “minor points,” and so on; but we must not consider any word of our God as a minor thing, if by that expression is implied that it is of small importance. We must accept every single word of precept, or prohibition, or instruction, as being what it ought to be, and neither to be diminished nor increased. We should not reason about the command of God as though it might be set aside or amended. He bids: we obey. May we enter into that

true spirit of obedience which is the unshaken belief that the Lord is right! Nothing short of this is the obedience of the inner man – the obedience which the Lord desires.

Furthermore, we must have *faith in the Lord's call upon us to obey*. Abraham went out from his father's house because he felt that, whatever God said to others, he had spoken to him, and said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Whatever the Lord may have said to the Chaldæans, or to other families in Ur, Abraham was not so much concerned with that as with the special word of command which the Lord had sent to his own soul. Oh, that we were most of all earnest to render personal obedience! It is very easy to offer unto God a sort of "other people's obedience" – to fancy that we are serving God, when we are finding fault with our neighbours, and lamenting that they are not so godly as they ought to be. Truly, we cannot help seeing their shortcomings; but we should do well to be less observant of them than we are. Let us turn our magnifying glasses upon ourselves. It is not so much our business to be weeding other people's gardens as to keep our own vineyard. To the Lord each one should cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" We, who are his chosen, redeemed from among men, called out from the rest of mankind, ought to feel that if no other ears hear the divine call, our ears must hear it; and if no other heart obeys, our soul rejoices to do so. We are bound with cords to the horns of the altar. The strongest ties of gratitude hold us to the service of Jesus: we must be obedient in life to him who, for our sakes, was obedient unto death. Our service to our Lord is freedom: we will to yield to his will. To delight him is our delight. It is a blessed thing when the inmost nature yearns to obey God, when obedience grows into a habit, and becomes the very element in which the spirit breathes. Surely it should be so with every one of the blood-washed children of the Most High, and their lives will prove that it is so. Others are bound to obey, but we should attend most to our own personal obligation, and set our own houses in order. Our obedience should begin at home, and it will find its hands full enough there. Obedience arises out of a *faith which is to us the paramount principle of action*. The kind of faith which produces obedience is lord of the understanding, a royal faith. The true believer believes in God beyond all his belief in anything else, and everything else. He can say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." His faith in God has become to him the crown of all his believings; the most assured of all his confidences. As gold is to the inferior metals, such is our trust in God to all our other trusts. To the genuine believer the eternal is as much above the temporal as the heavens are above the earth. The infinite rolls, like Noah's flood, over the tops of the hills of the present and the finite. To the believer, let a truth be tinctured with the glory of God, and he values it; but if God and eternity be not there, he will leave these trifles to those who choose them. You must have a paramount faith in God, or else the will of God will not be a paramount rule to you. Only a reigning faith will make us subject to its power, so as to be in all things obedient to the Lord. The chief thought in life with the true believer is, "How can I obey God?" His great anxiety is to do the will of God, or acceptably to suffer that will; and if he can obey, he will make no terms with God, and stand upon no reservations. He will pray, "Refine me from the dross of rebellion, and let the furnace be as fierce as thou wilt." His choice is neither wealth, nor ease, nor honour; but that he may glorify God in his body, and his spirit, which are the Lord's. Obedience has become as much his rule as self-will is the rule of others. His cry unto the Lord is, "By thy command I stay or go. Thy will is my will; thy pleasure is my pleasure; thy law is my love."

God grant us a supreme, over-mastering faith, for this is the kind of faith which we must have if we are to lead obedient lives! We must have faith in God's right to rule, faith in the rightness of his commands, faith in our personal obligation to obey, and faith that the command must be the paramount authority of our being. With this faith of God's elect, we shall realize the object of our election – namely, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.

Dear friend, have you this kind of faith? I will withdraw the question as directed to you, and I will ask it of myself: Have I that faith which leads me to obey my God? – for obedience, if it be of the kind we are speaking of, is faith in action – faith walking with God, or, shall I say, walking before the Lord in the land of the living? If we have a faith which is greedy in hearing, severe in judging, and rapid in self-congratulation, but not inclined to obedience, we have the faith of hypocrites. If our faith enables us to set up as patterns of sound doctrine, and qualifies us to crack the heads of all who differ from us, and yet lacks the fruit of obedience, it will leave us among the “dogs” who are “without.” The faith that makes us obey is alone the faith which marks the children of God. It is better to have the faith that obeys than the faith which moves mountains. I would sooner have the faith which obeys than the faith which heaps the altar of God with sacrifices, and perfumes his courts with incense. I would rather obey God than rule an empire; for, after all, the loftiest sovereignty a soul can inherit is to have dominion over self by rendering believing obedience to the Most High.

Thus much upon faith. “By faith Abraham obeyed;” and by faith only can you and I obey.

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE KIND OF OBEDIENCE WHICH FAITH PRODUCES. This I shall illustrate from the whole of the verse.

Genuine faith in God creates a prompt obedience. “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed.” There was an immediate response to the command. Delayed obedience is disobedience. I wish some Christians, who put off duty, would remember this. Continued delay of duty is a continuous sin. If I do not obey the divine command, I sin; and every moment that I continue in that condition, I repeat the sin. This is a serious matter. If a certain act is my duty at this hour, and I leave it undone, I have sinned; but it will be equally incumbent upon me during the next hour; and if I still refuse, I disobey again, and so on till I do obey. Neglect of a standing command must grow very grievous if it be persisted in for years. In proportion as the conscience becomes callous upon the subject, the guilt becomes the more provoking to the Lord. To refuse to do right is a great evil; but to continue in that refusal till conscience grows numb upon the matter is far worse. I remember a person coming to be baptized, who said that he had been a believer in the Lord Jesus for forty years; and that he had always seen the ordinance to be Scriptural. I felt grieved that he had so long been disobedient to a known duty, and I proposed to him that he should be baptized at once. It was in a village, and he said that there were no conveniences. I offered to go with him to the brook, and baptize him, but he said, “No; he that believeth shall not make haste.” Here was one who had wilfully disobeyed his Lord, for as many years as the Israelites in the wilderness, upon a matter so easy of performance; and yet, after confessing his fault, he was not willing to amend it, but perverted a passage of Scripture to excuse him in further delay. David says, “I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.” I give this case as a typical illustration; there are a hundred spiritual, moral, domestic, business, and religious duties,

which men put off in the same manner, as if they thought that any time would do for God, and he must take his turn with the rest. What would you say to your boy, if you bade him go upon an errand, and he answered you, "I will go to-morrow." Surely you would "morrow" him in a style which would abide upon his memory. Your tone would be sharp, and you would bid him go at once. If he, then, promised to run in an hour's time, would you call that obedience? It would be impudence. Obedience is for the present tense: it must be prompt, or it is nothing. Obedience respects the time of the command as much as any other part of it. To hesitate is to be disloyal. To halt and consider whether you will obey or not, is rebellion in the germ. If thou believest in the living God unto eternal life, thou wilt be quick to do thy Lord's bidding, even as a maid hearkens to her mistress. Thou wilt not be as the horse, which needs whip and spur; thy love will do more for thee than compulsion could do for slaves. Thou wilt have wings to thy heels to hasten thee along the way of obedience. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Next, *obedience should be exact*. Even Abraham's obedience failed somewhat in this at first; for he started at once from Ur of the Chaldees, but he only went as far as Haran, and there he stayed till his father died; and then the precept came to him again, and he set off for the land which the Lord had promised to show him. If any of you have only half obeyed, I pray that you may take heed of this, and do all that the Lord commands, carefully endeavouring to keep back no part of the revenue of obedience.

Yet the error of the great patriarch was soon corrected, for we read that "Abraham, when he was called to go out... went out." I have only omitted intermediate words, which do not alter the sense: and that is exactly how we should obey. That which the Lord commands we should do – just *that*, and not another thing of our own devising. How very curiously people try to give God something else instead of what he asks for! The Lord says, "My son, give me thine heart," and they give him ceremonies. He asks of them obedience, and they give him will-worship. He asks faith, and love, and justice; and they offer ten thousand rivers of oil, and the fat of fed beasts. They will give all except the one thing which he will be pleased with: yet "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." If the Lord has given you true faith in himself, you will be anxious not so much to do a notable thing as to do exactly what God would have you to do. Mind your jots and tittles with the Lord's precepts. Attention to little things is a fine feature in obedience: it lies much more as to its essence in the little things than in the great ones. Few dare rush into great crimes, and yet they will indulge in secret rebellion, for their heart is not right with God. Hence so many mar what they call obedience by forgetting that they serve a heart-searching, rein-trying God, who observes thoughts and motives. He would have us obey him with the heart, and that will lead us, not merely to regard a few pleasing commands, but to have respect unto all his will. Oh, for a tender conscience, which will not wilfully neglect, nor presumptuously transgress!

And next, mark well that Abraham rendered *practical obedience*. When the Lord commanded Abraham to quit his father's house, he did not say that he would think it over; he did not discuss it *pro* and *con*, in an essay; he did not ask his father, Terah, and his neighbours to consider it; but, as he was called to go out, he went out. Alas! dear friends, we have so much talk, and so little obedience! The religion of mere brain and jaw does not amount to much. We want the religion of hands and feet. I remember a place in Yorkshire, years ago, where a good man said to me, "We have a real good minister." I said, "I am glad to hear it." "Yes," he said; "he is a fellow that preaches with his feet." Well, now, that is a capital thing if

a preacher preaches with his feet by walking with God, and with his hands by working for God. He does well who glorifies God by where he goes, and by what he does; he will excel fifty others who only preach religion with their tongues. You, dear hearers, are not good hearers so long as you are only hearers; but when the heart is affected by the ear, and the hand follows the heart, then your faith is proved. That kind of obedience which comes of faith in God is real obedience, since it shows itself by its works.

Next, *faith produces a far-seeing obedience*. Note this. "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should *after* receive for an inheritance." How great a company would obey God if they were paid for it on the spot! They have "respect unto the recompense of the reward;" but they must have it in the palm of their hand. With them – "A bird in hand is better far, than two which in the bushes are." They are told that there is heaven to be had, and they answer that, if heaven were to be had here, as an immediate freehold, they might look after it, but they cannot afford to wait. To inherit a country after this life is over is too like a fairy tale for their practical minds. Many there are who enquire, "Will religion pay? Is there anything to be made out of it? Shall I have to shut up my shop on Sundays? Must I alter my mode of dealing, and curtail my profits?" When they have totalled up the cost, and have taken all things into consideration, they come to the conclusion that obedience to God is a luxury which they can dispense with, at least until near the end of life. Those who practise the obedience of faith look for the reward hereafter, and set the greatest store by it. To their faith alone the profit is exceeding great. To take up the cross will be to carry a burden, but it will also be to find rest. They know the words, "No cross, no crown;" and they recognize the truth that, if there is no obedience here, there will be no reward hereafter. This needs a faith that has eyes which can see afar off, across the black torrent of death, and within the veil which parts us from the unseen. A man will not obey God unless he has learned to endure "as seeing him who is invisible."

Yet, remember that *the obedience which comes of true faith is often bound to be altogether unreckoning and implicit*; for it is written, "He went out, not knowing whither he went." God bade Abraham journey, and he moved his camp at once. Into the unknown land he made his way; through fertile regions, or across a wilderness; among friends, or through the midst of foes, he pursued his journey. He did not know where his way would take him, but he knew that the Lord had bidden him go. Even bad men will obey God when they think fit; but good men will obey when they know not what to think of it. It is not ours to judge the Lord's command, but to follow it. I am weary with hearing men saying, "Yes, we know that such a course would be right; but then the consequences might be painful: good men would be grieved, the cause would be weakened, and we ourselves should get into a world of trouble, and put our hands into a hornet's nest." There is not much need to preach caution nowadays: those who would run any risk for the truth's sake are few enough. Consciences, tender about the Lord's honour, have not been produced for the last few years in any great number. Prudent consideration of consequences is superabundant; but the spirit which obeys, and dares all things for Christ's sake – where is it? The Abrahams of to-day will not go out from their kindred; they will put up with anything sooner than risk their livelihoods. If they do go out, they must know where they are going, and how much is to be picked up in the new country. I am not pronouncing any judgment upon their conduct, I am merely pointing out the fact. Our Puritan forefathers recked little of property or liberty when these stood in the way of conscience: they defied exile and danger sooner than give up a grain of truth; but their

descendants prefer peace and worldly amusements, and pride themselves on “culture” rather than on heroic faith. The modern believer must have no mysteries, but must have everything planed down to a scientific standard. Abraham “went out, not knowing whither he went,” but the moderns must have every information with regard to the way, and then they will not go. If they obey at all, it is because their own superior judgments incline that way; but to go forth, not knowing whither they go, and to go at all hazards, is not to their minds at all. They are so highly “cultured” that they prefer to be original, and map out their own way.

Brethren, having once discerned the voice of God, obey without question. If you have to stand alone and nobody will befriend you, stand alone and God will befriend you. If you should get the ill word of those you value most, bear it. What, after all, are ill words, or good words, as compared with the keeping of a clear conscience by walking in the way of the Lord? The line of truth is narrow as a razor’s edge; and he needs to wear the golden sandals of the peace of God who shall keep to such a line. Through divine grace may we, like Abraham, walk with our hand in the hand of the Lord, even where we cannot see our way!

The obedience which faith produces must be continuous. Having commenced the separated life, Abraham continued to dwell in tents, and sojourn in the land which was far from the place of his birth. His whole life may be thus summed up: “By faith Abraham obeyed.” He believed, and, therefore, walked before the Lord in a perfect way. He even offered up his son Isaac. “Abraham’s mistake,” was it? Alas for those who dare to talk in that fashion! “By faith he obeyed,” and to the end of his life he was never an original speculator, or inventor of ways for self-will; but a submissive servant of that great Lord, who deigned to call him “friend.” May it be said of everyone here that by faith he obeyed! Do not cultivate doubt, or you will soon cultivate disobedience. Set this up as your standard, and henceforth be this the epitome of your life – “By faith he obeyed.”

III. Just a moment or two upon the third point. Let us consider THE SORT OF LIFE WHICH WILL COME OF THIS FAITH AND OBEDIENCE. It will be, in the first place, *life without that great risk which else holds us in peril.* A man runs a great risk when he steers himself. Rocks or no rocks, the peril lies in the helmsman. The believer is no longer the helmsman of his own vessel; he has taken a pilot on board. To believe in God, and to do his bidding, is a great escape from the hazards of personal weakness and folly. If we do as God commands, and do not seem to succeed, it is no fault of ours. Failure itself would be success so long as we did not fail to obey. If we passed through life unrecognized, or were only acknowledged by a sneer from the worldly-wise, and if this were regarded as a failure, it could be borne with equanimity so long as we knew that we had kept our faith towards God, and our obedience to him. Providence is God’s business, obedience is ours. What comes out of our life’s course must remain with the Lord: to obey is our sole concern. What harvest will come of our sowing we must leave with the Lord of the harvest; but we ourselves must look to the basket and the seed, and scatter our handfuls in the furrows without fail. We can win “Well done, good and *faithful* servant”: to be a successful servant is not in our power, and we shall not be held responsible for it. Our greatest risk is over when we obey. God makes faith and obedience the way of safety.

In the next place, we shall enjoy a *life free from its heaviest cares.* If we were in the midst of the wood, with Stanley, in the centre of Africa, our pressing care would be to find our way out; but when we have nothing to do but to obey, our road is mapped out for us. Jesus

says, "Follow me;" and this makes our way plain, and lifts from our shoulders a load of cares. To choose our course by policy is a way of thorns, to obey is as the king's highway. Policy has to tack about, to return upon its own courses, and often to miss the port after all; but faith, like a steam-vessel, steers straight for the harbour's mouth, and leaves a bright track of obedience behind her as she forges ahead. When our only care is to obey, a thousand other cares take their flight. If we sin in order to succeed, we have sown the seeds of care and sorrow, and the reaping will be a grievous one. If we will forsake the path, and try short cuts, we shall have to do a deal of wading through mire and slough, we shall bespatter ourselves from head to foot, we shall be wearied to find our way, and all because we could not trust God, and obey his bidding. Obedience may appear difficult, and it may bring with it sacrifice; but, after all, it is the nearest and the best road. Her ways are, in the long run, ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. He who, through the Holy Spirit, is always believingly obedient, has chosen the good part. He it is who can sing –

"I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are thine;
I live in triumph, too, for thou
Hast made thy triumphs mine."

Or, to change the verse, he is like Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, for that lowland is part of the great Plain of Obedience, and he also can sing –

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide."

Although he may not reach the heights of ambition, nor stand upon the giddy crags of presumption, yet he shall know superior joys. He has hit upon the happiest mode of living under heaven – a mode of life akin to the perfect life above. He shall dwell in God's house, and be still praising him.

The way of obedience is a *life of the highest honour*. Obedience is the glory of a human life – the glory which our Lord has given to his chosen, even his own glory. "He learned obedience." He never struck out an original course, but he did always the things which pleased the Father. Be this our glory. By faith we yield our intelligence to the highest intelligence: we are led, guided, directed; and we follow where our Lord has gone. To us who believe, he is honour. To a soldier it is the greatest honour to have accomplished his sovereign's command. He does not debase his manhood who subjects it to honourable command; nay, he is even exalted by obeying in the day of danger. It is no dishonour to have it said:

"Theirs not to reason why;
Theirs but to dare and die."

The bravest and the most honoured of men are these who implicitly obey the command of the King of kings. Among his children, they are best who best knew their Father's mind, and yield to it the gladdest obedience. Should we have any other ambition, within the walls of our Father's house, than to be perfectly obedient children before him, and implicitly trustful towards him?

But, brethren, this is a kind of *life which will bring communion with God*. God often hides his face behind the clouds of dust which his children make by their self-will. If we transgress against him, we shall soon be in trouble; but a holy walk – the walk described by my text as faith working obedience – is heaven beneath the stars. God comes down to walk with men who obey. If they walk with him, he walks with them. The Lord can only have fellowship with his servants as they obey. Obedience is heaven in us, and it is the preface of our being in heaven. Obedient faith is the way to eternal life – nay, it is eternal life revealing itself.

The obedience of faith creates a form of *life which may be safely copied*. As parents, we wish so to live that our children may copy us to their lasting profit. Teachers should aspire to be what they would have their classes to be. If you go to school to the obedience of faith, you will be good teachers. Children usually exaggerate their models; but there will be no fear of their going too far in faith, or in obedience to the Lord. I like to hear a man say, when his father has gone, "My dear father was a man that feared God, and I would fain follow him. When I was a boy, I thought him rather stiff and Puritanical; but now I see he had a good reason for it all. I feel much the same myself, and would do nothing of which God would not approve." The bringing up of families is a very great matter. This is too much neglected nowadays; and yet it is the most profitable of all holy service, and the hope of the future. Great men, in the best sense, are bred in holy households. God-fearing example at home is the most fruitful of religious agencies. I knew a little humble Dissenting chapel, of the strictest sect of our religion. Culture there was none in the ministry; but the people were staunch believers. Five or six families, attending that despised ministry, learned to believe what they did believe, and to live upon it. It was by no means a liberal creed which they received, but what they held operated on their lives. Five or six families came out of that place, and became substantial in wealth, and generous in liberality. These all sprang from plain, humble men, who knew their Bibles, and believed the doctrines of grace. They learned to fear God, and to trust in him, and to rest in the old faith, and even in worldly things they prospered. Their descendants, of the third generation, are not all of them of their way of thinking; but they have risen through God's blessing on their grandfathers. These men were fed on substantial meat, and they became sturdy old fellows, able to cope with the world, and fight their way. I would to God that we had more men to-day who would maintain truth at all hazards. Alas! the gutta-percha backbone is common among Dissenters, and they take to politics, and the new philosophy, and therefore we are losing the force of our testimony, and are, I fear, decreasing in numbers too. The Lord give us back those whose examples can be safely copied in all things, even though they be decried as being "rigid" or "too precise"! We serve a jealous God, and a holy Saviour; wherefore let us mind that we do not grieve his Spirit, and cause him to withdraw from us.

Lastly, faith working obedience is a kind of *life which needs great grace*. Every careless professor will not live in this fashion. It will need watchfulness and prayer, and nearness to God, to maintain the faith which obeys in everything. Beloved, "he giveth more

grace.” The Lord will enable us to add to our faith all the virtues. Whenever you fail in any respect in your lives, do not sit down, and question the goodness of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost; that is not the way to increase the stream of obedience, but to diminish the source of it. Believe more, instead of less. Try, by God’s grace, to believe more in the pardon of sin, more in the renovation by the Holy Spirit, more in the everlasting covenant, more in the love that had no beginning, and will never, never cease. Your hope does not lie in rushing into the darkness of doubt; but in returning repentantly into the still clearer light of a steadier faith. May you be helped to do so, and may we, all of us, and the whole multitude of the Lord’s redeemed, by faith go on to obey our Lord in all things!

I leave this word with you. Remember, “By faith Abraham obeyed.” Have faith in God, and then obey, obey, obey, and keep on obeying, until the Lord shall call you home. Obey on earth, and then you will have learned to obey in heaven. Obedience is the rehearsal of eternal bliss. Practice by obedience now the song which you will sing for ever in glory. God grant his grace to us! Amen.