

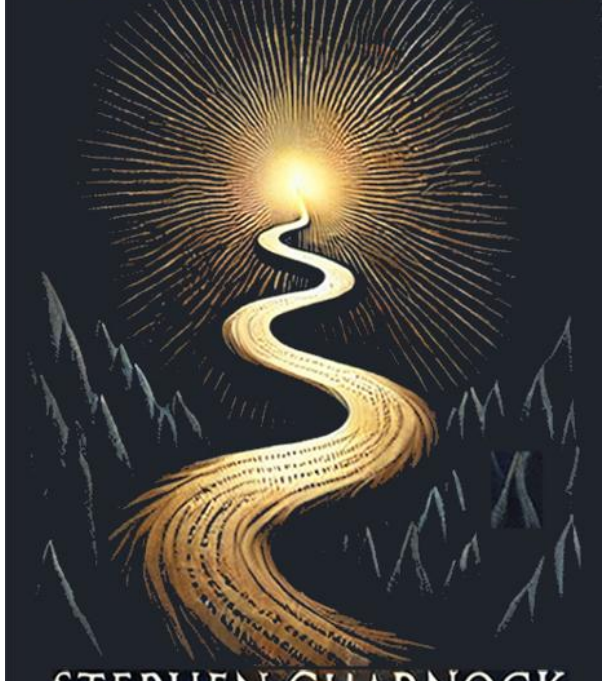
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A Discourse of Obedience

by Stephen Charnock

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"You are my friends if you do whatever I command you." - John
15:14.

These words are part of Christ's speech after the supper he had arranged. The chapter starts with a parable, where Christ compares himself to a vine and the disciples (and thus all believers) to branches. Some believe that Christ used this parable when he passed by some vineyards and used it to raise a discussion to make their thoughts more spiritual upon viewing the creatures. Regardless of whether this was true, the speech is fantastic, both to display the close union and relationship between Christ and believers, and the method and means of spiritual growth in sanctification and holiness. Christ was sent into the world to preach a new religion, but not a lazy one; instead, it should be fruitful. God the Father is the farmer who cultivates the vine and purges the branches to make them fruitful. Christ uses several reasons to persuade them to remain in him and, therefore, to be fruitful.

(1) Verse 6: The fire is the fate of unproductive branches. "If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned."

(2) Verse 7: Their prayers would be powerful with God if they practically and fruitfully followed his words. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

(3) Verse 8: The glory of God and the honour of Christ are promoted by it. When they pray in order to be fruitful, and thus bring glory to God, they need not fear the answer to their prayers. "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

(4) Verse 9: Out of gratitude, since Christ had already demonstrated the highest affection to them, and would continue to do so. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." The evidence of Christ's love is their obedience to his commands. Verse 10: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." If they want to receive Christ's love, they must obey him and follow his example. Christ's commands are not an exercise of authority, but rather an expression of his love and concern for their well-being. Verse 11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." To experience joy, they must keep his commandments. The way to demonstrate their affection to Christ is by loving one another. Verse 13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Christ will show his love by laying down his life, and they can demonstrate their love by obeying his commands.

The verse serves as a bridge between two arguments to persuade them.

(1) His immense love for them, as he laid down his life for them. Verse 13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

(2) The revelation he had given them, which was complete and clear. Verse 15: "All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." So, they have Christ's love to encourage them and his revelation to guide them. Christ invites them to obey him by using an honourable title of friends. They will be counted as his friends if they keep his commands. He doesn't demand only their love for one another but the practice of all his precepts.

Christ calls them friends. By obeying his commands, they will actively show that they are his friends. Passively, Christ will reveal himself to them. He has treated them as friends by sharing with them the counsels of God that others do not know. It's appropriate for them to treat him as their friend by obeying his commands. The honour of being Christ's friend can make his commands easier to accept. However, Christ does not call them friends so that they forget that he is their Lord and they are his servants. He mentions friendship as their privilege and issues his commands to remind them of their duty. "If you do what I command you." Augustine said it was a great honour to call his servants friends.

All of you. It is universal. Men may have few intimates, but Christ's heart is large enough to include everyone. Friendship with Christ is the privilege of every obedient person.

You, even if you are poor and struggling. Outward hardship does not prevent a spiritual connection.

You, my disciples and apostles working for God, are not my friends unless you obey me. It is not gifts or high positions, but exact obedience that makes one eligible for this privilege.

You are my friends now, not just in the future. This statement doesn't exclude the future, but assures them of it. They will be Christ's friends because they already are. It's not something to wait for but to possess in the present.

If you do whatever I command you. Adam had a commandment that, if he had kept it, he would have continued in God's love. Christ has given us commandments that, if we obey, we will remain in Christ's love. Obedience is necessary, not as a way of earning favour, but as a condition of it. Christ reveals how pleasing obedience is to him by giving the practitioner such an honourable title. It is beneficial for us to have this title and obey Christ's commands for our own well-being.

The text describes both privilege and duty, relationship and action.

Privilege and relationship: friends.

Duty and action: if you obey.

Notice how wonderful the relationship between a holy soul and Christ is! Christ doesn't say, "I love you if you keep my commands." A man may love his servant or his animal, but he won't grant them special friendship due to the servant's position and the animal's inability. This title is greater than an assurance of love; Christ loves his disciples as friends, not only as servants.

Christ's love is humble and modest! He calls insignificant humans the friends of God. We cannot be his servants unless we obey his

commands, but by keeping them, we elevate ourselves to a higher status than that of servants, even to that of friends.

Christ's commands, not his deeds, are the object of our obedience. Don't focus on what I do, but on what I ask you to do. Our conformity to Christ does not require us to imitate his actions, but to obey his commands. Christ's example is not our guide without his precepts. Some of Christ's actions are unrepeatable, but all his commands are followable.

Privilege is linked to duty.

The point I want to make is about the nature of obedience, as inferred from these words: "If you do whatever I command you."

(1.) Do.

Obedience must be affirmative. Don't just avoid what I forbid. It is not enough to abstain from producing bad fruit; we must also produce good fruit. If we neglect our duties, we are just as guilty as if we committed sins. The fig tree was cursed not because it produced bad fruit, but because it produced no fruit at all. No father will be satisfied with a child who only avoids doing wrong, but doesn't do what he or she is supposed to do. Many people, like the Pharisees, are content with avoiding negative actions such as not being profane, a drunkard, or a swearer. But how can one claim the privilege of being Christ's friend unless he or she can demonstrate as many positive actions as negative ones? We must be as careful to do what he wants as to avoid what he dislikes. Those who truly "put off the old man" must also "put on the new." It's not a genuine friendship to avoid actions that could upset a friend without also doing things that could please him or her. God expects us to obey him in a way that corresponds to the happiness he has promised us. He frees us not only from hell and wrath, but also grants us access to heaven and

happiness. Therefore, he desires that we do good works, not just abstain from sin. You may recall that our Saviour is not only called Jesus because he "saves from sin," Mat. 1:21, but also Christ, because God has appointed him to govern, prepare, and equip souls for heaven.

(2.) Do it as friends. Obedience must be genuine. An act may appear friendly when there is nothing of friendship or goodwill in the heart. Every commandment requires not only outward but also inward compliance, not only physical action but also spiritual attitude. God does not want the skin of a sacrifice without the flesh and entrails, nor does he want obedience that lacks truthfulness in the inner being, Ps. 51:6. Christ is concerned not only with the outward appearance but also with the substance of every action. Duties are not distinguished by their outward appearance, but by their internal nature. Waters may have the same colour, yet one may be sweet and the other brackish. Two apples may have the same colour, yet one may be a crabapple, and the other may be delicious. A serpent may have a speckled skin, but an internal poison. We must adhere to the rule, ensuring that the content of our actions matches it; otherwise, we may commit gross wickedness, as those who believed that they were doing God's work by killing his righteous servants, John 16:2. We must also pay attention to the attitude of our hearts; otherwise, we may be guilty of gross hypocrisy. A friendly action cannot come from the heart of an enemy, any more than good fruit can come from a rotten tree. It may appear plausible when the heart is corrupt, like a person with bad breath who holds a perfume in his mouth and smells good; the fragrance is not from his breath, but from the perfume, which does not remove the foulness of his stomach or the corruption of his lungs. Christ cannot regard any service from a rotten heart as worthwhile. A multitude of such actions is like a zero, signifying nothing without a numeral in front: Prov. 10:20, "The heart of the

wicked is of little value." Sound actions cannot originate from a corrupt heart, any more than sweet water can come from a bitter fountain. One who does not consider the state of his or her heart, whether it has been healed, whether it is in harmony, whether it has been melted, or whether it has been frozen, and who does not care how unenergetic and unsavoury his or her spirit is, does not do anything as a friend of Christ.

(3.) Act as friends; obedience must be genuine. It must come from love 'with a pure heart,' as mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:5. In the command to love others, which precedes the text, outward actions alone are worthless without this component, but even small acts with genuine love are highly valued. A cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42) or a small box of ointment given with heartfelt respect for God are esteemed and remembered. Just as blessings are not appreciated by a good person without God's love in them, our acts of service are not pleasing to God without love in them. A little food and drink given with love for God is better than great wealth given with His displeasure. Job's boils and rags, endured with love for God, were worth more than his enemies' fine robes, and a starving Lazarus was better off than a rich epicure. A single act of service with affection for God is more valuable than all the works of people without it. It is not a sign of friendship to give a rich gift to someone when you know they have an aversion to it. Grand gestures of service to Christ without genuine affection are of the same nature. Christ wants us to follow his example; he gave himself along with his special blessings, and we must give ourselves along with our special duties. But how often do people perform duties not out of love for Christ but out of love for themselves? Judas' responsibility for the money bag may have been one reason for his obedience to Christ, so that he could benefit from it, and when the Pharisees offered him more, he betrayed and deserted Jesus. "Make me bishop of Rome," one person

said, "and I'll be a Christian." When people pretend to serve God in order to gain advantage from others, or when they pretend to be religious in order to cheat more easily, "So that we may perish more lucratively under the Christian name," they are not doing what Christ commands, but what they desire.

(4.) Do. Don't be forced to do, but do willingly and freely. Some people give God only eye-service, which Paul admonished servants not to give their masters in Eph. 6:6. They may offer some form of obedience while they have serious thoughts of God's omniscience, but they mock Him when His back is turned. Others may obey out of fear of judgment, which can motivate but cannot be the first life of our obedience. A person may appear to be obedient and willing, but with the wrong motive, just as schoolboys may diligently study one day not because they love learning, but because they want to play the next day. Similarly, a child at play may run quickly to do his father's errand, not out of obedience but to quickly return to his game. Another form of willingness may arise when obedience suits our corruption, and this type of obedience is what the devil desires. In the story of Job, the devil was willing to follow God's order to deprive Job of his estate, not out of obedience but with the intention of ruining him and hoping that hypocrisy would be revealed instead of sincerity.

[1.] There is a freedom as opposed to constraint. It is not the act itself, but the naturalness of it, that is a sign of obedience. Constrained obedience may be consistent with a devilish nature and therefore cannot be a sign of friendship to Christ. The devil obeys God, but by force. He is forced to negative obedience and sometimes to positive obedience, not by any conscience of a command, but by the constraint of God's power. For example, in Luke 8:28, when Christ commanded him to come out of his long-possessed habitation.

There may be a constraint by education that is scarcely noticeable, while it is more visible in a profane man. Like a rugged stone that will move no further than a strong arm can throw it, so a profane man moves no farther than his conscience or some fear of man throws him in any duty of obedience. But a man who has the advantage of a religious education is like a stone smoothed into the right figure that moves upon a plain at the slightest touch. Although there is constraint that goes into that motion, it is not so noticeable because the parts are by an outward smoothness fitted for such motion. The same is true of a man who is smoothed by education.

However, the obedience Christ requires is to be free. Good actions are therefore called fruits of righteousness, fruits of holiness, because just as a tree brings forth fruits naturally, so does a true Christian bring forth righteousness. The gardener helps by watering and digging, but he does not constrain the tree. God helps the man at the first conversion, but he does not force the soul. In Gal. 5:19, 22, it is observed that sins are called works, and graces are called fruits, to show the freedom of a holy man and the servile frame of a wicked man. A good man is not put upon a duty merely by a sudden fit and importunity of conscience. Just as wicked men naturally lay in provisions for their lusts, so do good men labor to lay in provisions for their obedience and graces. The law, like a schoolmaster, scourges some truant souls to obedience, but the gospel gives a willingness of spirit in the day of power, Ps. 110:3. The difference between these two powers is that the law is a powerful constrainer mixed with severe threats that drive to fear, and the gospel is a powerful constraint mixed with kind promises that help to love.

[2.] Freedom, as opposed to dullness and heaviness. God's delight in a holy person is given as one reason for his mercy, as in Psalms 18:19, "He delivered me, because he delighted in me." And our

delight in Christ should be the reason for our duty. "If ye do whatsoever I command you." Christ does not require a sluggish and heavy action, but an obedience such as he himself performed to his Father, as stated in John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Christ's obedience was not a heavy motion; it was his "meat and drink to do his Father's will," as in John 4:34. Meat and drink are not only naturally desired, but also delightfully received. Cheerfulness accompanies the election of a thing, as stated in Psalms 119:173-174, "I have chosen thy precepts, and thy law is my delight." Lumpishness is a sign that we never chose it, but were forced to it. Sin is sweet to a wicked man, as a dainty to a glutton's palate, Job 10:12. He accounts duty as his burden, and a true disciple accounts it his honour. He, like the sun, rejoices to run, and when he is in service, his heart cries out, with Peter in the mount, "It is good to be here." Such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies, as in Isaiah 64:5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." Christ does not love melancholy and phlegmatic service; such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and religion. It betrays our having jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion, it makes others think duties are drudgeries, and not privileges. Therefore, the more cheerfulness in obedience, the more of a Christian temper; the more dullness, the more of an antichristian frame.

The disciples of Christ do not possess this liveliness in a constant equality. The wings of the soul drenched in sin, as well as the wings of a bird bemired, will flag. A good man's heaviness is from infirmities and distempers. A strong, active man may be laid upon his sickbed and be loath to be stirred, but a carnal man's heaviness is from nature and willingness. A wicked man's heaviness is at his duty, but a good man's heaviness is at his own deficiency; his delight

consists in the spirit, for the flesh is weak and will never be otherwise in this world.

(3.) Do whatever, etc. But not lazily; obedience must be diligent. God does not care for slow obedience. He did not want an ass offered in sacrifice, as in Exod. 13:13, but would have it redeemed with a lamb or have its neck broken. A true Christian is like a seraphim with six wings to fly on God's errands, as in Isa. 6:2; or like the living creatures in Ezek. 1:14, who ran and returned at the appearance of a flash of lightning, which is the quickest motion. Sound members move at the command of the will, whereas paralyzed members must be dragged along. Man naturally wants a ready God but not a ready heart; he wants a God ready to attend his complaints but does not want a heart ready to attend God's commands. But good men take God at His word, whether it is a word of precept, when He has any work for them to do, or a word of promise, when they have any wants for Him to supply. Hypocrites may be obedient in promises, like the son in the Gospel who promised to go into the vineyard in Mat. 21:29, 30. A good man does more without open resolving, while another resolves more without open doing. A master will take it badly if a servant disputes his commands. Paul set about the work he was ordered to do quickly in Gal. 1:16, "I consulted not with flesh and blood"; he did not call flesh and blood into a cabinet council. What we do for Christ, we must do without consulting with corruption, which is an enemy to God and His ways. Such counsellors will provide us with evasions to slip from our duty and represent things as either impossible or unseasonable. They will either say that it cannot be done at all, or that it may be done better at another time. As it is said of our own nation, "We lose more by treaties than we gain by war," so it may be said of our corruption, "We lose more by such treaties than we gain by an open war against it." God would employ Moses, though he had a slow speech, but He checked him for

his slow obedience. Abraham was as quick in his observance of God's command as Moses was slow, as in Gen. 17:23, "The selfsame day" in which he had received the command of circumcision, he put it into practice. He would make no pauses, lest carnal reason should step in with objections. The readiness of the Gentiles to obey Christ is expressed in Ps. 18:44, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me," like Elisha who, upon Elijah's spreading his mantle over him, left his father, oxen, and plough, and ran after him. The more fire there is in anything, the more active it is; the more of a divine spirit, the more vigorous.

(4.) Obedience must be constant, not done sporadically. God desires constant obedience: Deut. 5:29 states, "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them!" A person's life will never be good until they do so.

[1.] In times of sin, obedience should be most visible. Good people should "shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15). The stars shine brightest on the darkest nights, when there are no clouds. Good people are like fountains that are hottest during the coldest seasons. When did David love and respect God's precepts the most? When people disregarded his law (Ps. 119:126-128). He doubled his appreciation and obedience to God's commands when he saw others violating them the most. He uses a double "Therefore," saying, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." The more people despised them, the more he valued them, because he knew they were most dear to God, since they were most hated by man. David had been refreshed by God when he was afflicted, and he would most please God when he was dishonoured. Wisdom, or Christ, justifies her children in the

sight of her adversaries; they should, therefore, justify wisdom in the sight of their enemies. Christ wants his people to bear witness, through their profession and practice, against the sins of their time. He will judge and condemn the world with them by their approval. Joseph of Arimathea went boldly to Pilate to request the body of Jesus, even though the malice of the age had risen so high as to put him to death. Sinful times increase the wickedness of the wicked, but strengthen the graces of the godly, making them more watchful, and watchfulness makes them more practical. We show ourselves to be Christ's true friends when we acknowledge him among a multitude of enemies. Opposition makes God take notice of our obedience in a special way. It is probable that Judas' resentment towards Mary's kindness in anointing Christ was the reason why the scent of that ointment was spread throughout the world.

[2.] In times of suffering. In times of suffering from God, such as desertion, Christ's obedience was outstanding; he obeyed God even when God had abandoned him. A true disciple is not like Saul, impatient to wait upon God when he hides his face and runs to a witch for counsel. Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," (Job 13:15). To obey Christ when he manifests his love is obedience to ourselves; to obey him when he veils himself is pure love and obedience to him.

In times of suffering from men, many people are obedient to their advantage, but to be obedient to death is the property of a true disciple (Revelation 3:21), as it was of his Master (Philippians 2:8). Misery makes people often forget their virtues more than their vices. Many are like the Jews who cry "Hosanna" when Christ rides in triumph and then fly from him or vote against him when he is condemned. Many come to live by Christ but not to die for him. Shame, mockery, and scoffing did not prevent Christ from dying for

us; why should they stop us from dying for Christ? The apostle speaks of cleaving to that which is good (Romans 12:9, κολλώμενοι); things glued are not easily separated. We should cling so closely to him that nothing should separate us from him. Wind will not blow a snail, or any other sticky substance, off a tree.

Therefore, constancy is an essential aspect of the obedience that Christ requires. His trees bear fruit in old age (Psalm 92:14). Age makes other things decay, but it makes a Christian flourish. Some people are like hot horses, full of spirit at the beginning of a journey and tired long before they reach their destination. A good disciple would not want temporary happiness from God, nor would he give God temporary obedience. Just as he wants his glory to last as long as God lives, he wants his obedience to last as long as he lives. Judas had a good beginning, but he destroyed it all in the end by betraying his Master.

The subject of this action must be the whole person. We cannot just do it with a part of ourselves, but our entire being must be surrendered to God. The tables of the law were written on both sides, Exodus 32:15-16, and so must our obedience be in every aspect of our lives. Ahab, Herod, and the stony ground were partial in their obedience, like "Ephraim, a cake not turned," Hosea 7:8, baked on one side and dough on the other. As Jerome said, "Nero within, Cato without." However, our obedience to Christ must correspond to our former enmity; just as that spread throughout the whole soul, so must our obedience. There must be an enlightened understanding, a flexible will, a tender conscience, regulated affections, and watchful members to carry out God's commands. As the father said to the prodigal, "All that I have is yours," so must our souls say to Christ, "Lord, all that I have is yours, understanding, will, affections, etc."

We must wholly sacrifice ourselves, just as the burnt offerings among the Israelites were entirely consumed.

The object is "whatsoever," as many things as I command you. We must not consider it enough to obey one or two commands, but every single one of them. Christ performed every command of His Father, and we must perform every command of Christ. One is not a person after God's own heart if they do not "fulfil all His will," as David did, Acts 13:22. Josiah also has the same commendation for both the universality of the subject and the universality of the object, "He turned to the Lord with all his soul, according to all the law of Moses," 2 Kings 23:35. There must be an habitual disposition that will be put into action when a particular command and an opportunity to obey it arise. No command is too good, too just, or too holy that it does not deserve our highest level of compliance. When we cannot fulfil it, we must lament our shortcomings. Obedience is completely out of tune if any single command is disregarded. The lute cannot produce music if one string, the treble, is broken. When the people went to gather manna on the Sabbath and broke the law, God accused them of violating the whole law, Exodus 16:27-28. It is disingenuous to neglect any command. If we want all our sins forgiven, then we should be willing to obey all of God's commands. It is also dangerous, just as a man who is supposed to travel ten miles but only travels nine will never reach his destination.

(1.) Whatever I command you, in its true meaning and purpose. We should not follow the example of the Pharisees who, although they do not erase the law, weaken it with false interpretations, making it insignificant and removing the life and soul of a command.

(2.) Whatever I command you, even if it seems insignificant and lowly to others. Just as Christ did not consider anything too lowly to

do for us, we should not consider anything too lowly to do for him. We should strive to be even more humble for the sake of Christ's honour. David affirmed that it was "better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The smallest duty must be carried out. Art is shown most in small works, and so is grace in the fulfilment of the smallest commands. Nature triumphs in small things, and even a fly shows God's power, just as the whole world does. The smallest act of sincerity is acceptable to God, just like the greatest hecatomb or the sacrifice of animals on a thousand hills. The smallest command should be as valuable to a righteous soul as the greatest. We should not ignore the greatest because of its difficulty, nor should we despise the smallest because of its insignificance. Whoever breaks even the smallest commandment will be least in the kingdom of heaven.

(3.) The person commanding: "Whatever I command you." The authority of Christ must be considered in all obedience, and His commandments must be our rule. When we follow the law without considering the authority of the one who enacts it, we are obeying the law but not the lawgiver. Men may follow the letter of the law, but still despise the authority of the one who gave it. As Jerome said, we should not so much consider the quantity of power, but the dignity of the one who holds it. We are not only to see Christ as a friend, but also obey Him as our sovereign. If we are friends of the king, we must not forget that we are also His subjects. We must do what Christ commands, not only out of love, but also out of duty, because He is our Saviour and our king.

Use 1: This reminds us of the excellence of the Christian religion. It demands the highest level of purity and confers the greatest privileges. It brings us to God's standards and gives us the friendship of our Creator. No other religion has so many benefits and so many

duties. Nothing requires such exactness in God's ways, nor bestows so much happiness upon the creature. Other religions may indulge some things to gain proselytes, and propose carnal rewards to entice them. But the commands of the gospel are holy, and the rewards are high. Other religions consist of negatives, while the gospel consists of positives. The gospel reveals more sin and demands more holiness. It gives us a reason to love, not to fear, as our motivation. It does not force us to obey, but persuades us with grace. Gospel obedience is not the result of bondage, but of love and friendship.

2. Obedience is not only our duty but also our privilege. It grants us the honour of being Christ's friend, and this indescribable comfort sweetens even the most difficult duty. Those who stand idle in the marketplace receive no such reward. It is a great honour to be a king's friend, but being a friend of Christ is beyond measure. "In keeping his commands there is great reward." This reward surpasses any earthly honour. Enoch was only the seventh from Adam, but his walking with God was his true honour. To be a friend of Christ in rags is a greater honour than being the king of the whole world in purple robes. Jerome said of a Roman senator that he was noble not because he was *Consularis* but because he was *Christianus*. The very act of holy obedience gives a sweeter reflection than all the pleasures of the world. Christ calls the gospel a yoke, but an easy one. He calls it a yoke as natural men think it, not as gracious men find it, for it is more of a privilege than a yoke. Christ reveals the glory of his love in the heart, as God revealed the glory of his presence in the temple.

3. Disobedient professors are inexcusable. The greater the honour offered as an invitation, the greater the sin in refusing the terms on which that honour can be enjoyed. It would be worth enduring the torments of thousands of years to attain the privilege of being Christ's friend, but that is not required. We don't have to sacrifice

our firstborn, or offer thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or suffer in hell for a finite number of years. No impossible or harsh penances are required, only "Do whatsoever I command you," and those who have tried them know that his commands are not burdensome, 1 John 5:3. How unreasonable it is not to exchange dung for gold, rags for robes, misery for happiness, hell for heaven, and sin for Christ! Anyone who refuses to become a prince's favourite by performing an easy task deserves to be spurned out of the court without pity. What excuse can there be for someone who will not exchange slavery to the devil for friendship with the Redeemer? Can anyone blame Christ for refusing to have any relation to them and ordering them to depart from him when they refused his friendship and wanted nothing to do with him?

4. How much comfort and encouragement can be drawn from this under all reproaches. Who would care about the barking of dogs when pursuing something with an excellent honour attached to it? The devil doesn't care about people's opinions of him; he doesn't consider their curses as a loss because he is of a higher nature and continues with his business. Should we, with a divine nature, be discouraged from obeying God because of reproaches? Shall reproaches discourage us from obedience which is attended with such great honour? What is it to be reproached and scorned for a little time here while we have the favour of God, and then after a few nights' sleep be raised out of the dust to glory, to enjoy his friendship forever, and to be in glory where he is? This would be a support when the bullets fly fast around us. It is impossible to be faint-hearted with lively thoughts of such great honour. Weigh this honour seriously and then weigh the obstructions, and see whether the latter is not outweighed by the former. Would a glorified saint, incarnated again in the world, decline the practice of obedience upon such a gallant encouragement, because of reproaches? People might as well

persuade him to fry in hell as to give up such great honour upon such light opposition. The rolling of a black cloud over a traveller's head won't cause him to break off a necessary journey to court to become the king's friend or his son-in-law.

5. What an incentive do we have, then, to exact obedience! This is Christ's delight, and he thinks it's fitting to reward it with no less than a special friendship. Christ looked upon the young man's morality with love, much more will he look upon an evangelical obedience. The pomp of the world, or the glittering vanities that man's heart runs after, can't lay any claim to this dignity. Even though obedience may be low, if it's sincere, it's the delight of Christ. He loves to go into his vineyard and look upon the "tender grapes," as well as upon the "ripe fruit," Canticles 7:12; 8:2. By obeying Christ's commands, we show ourselves to be his friends and maintain his honour in the world. This silently convinces others and makes them have some veneration for religion. People usually judge principles by practices, and you never hear anyone speak against the principles of religion without first criticizing the practices of its followers. By obeying Christ, we glorify God and Christ, Matthew 5:16, i.e., we make others speak well of the ways of religion. Let this honour of being the friends of Christ encourage us to obedience as the means. It's a shame for those who could attain such a privilege to pursue anything lower. Alexander pursued kingdoms. Domitian loved to catch flies. How many conform to people's principles, to their will, for a small reward, or even for no reward? Shouldn't we conform to our Redeemer's will for so glorious a title? We must first be Jacobs, supplanters of vice, before we can be Israels, seers of God.

Let's conclude with a few directions:

(1.) Let's live as if Christ is watching us, to see whether we are acting as his friends or not. Let's remember that every action is recorded by our conscience, remembered by Christ, and will be judged by him either as an act of friendship or enmity. People may only see the outward appearance of our actions, but Christ sees our heart and the spirit behind it, to see if we are conforming to his commandments. Before doing anything, we should remember that we are being watched, and Christ is seeing our thoughts, principles, and intentions.

(2.) Let's live as if every action could either gain or lose the favour of Christ. We do not know if our actions may lead to Christ's favour or rejection. We do not know if our eternity would be blessed or miserable, depending on our actions. Therefore, we should be careful and mindful of our actions, as they could have eternal consequences.

(3.) Let's live as if the glory of Christ depends on every action we take. If our credit, wealth, and relationships depended on one action, we would be diligent and careful in doing it. Let's remember that our relationship with Christ and his honour are at stake in every action we take, and act accordingly.

(4.) Let's live as if we must give an account immediately for everything we have done. Let's imagine Christ's tribunal and ask ourselves whether we can account for our friendship and obedience to him in every action we take.

(5.) Let's live as if we see Christ standing before us, crucified with all the obligations of love on his part. Let's consider whether the act we're about to take is suited to such inestimable kindness or a putting him to an open shame. Let's not wound him whose heart is open for us and who breathes kindness towards us.

(6.) Let's live as we think a damned soul would live if he were again to live under the knowledge of such a promise. Let's obey wholeheartedly, pray fervently, inquire about his commands diligently, and take every opportunity to pursue our duty and attain our privilege. Let's imagine a damned soul standing before us when we're about to do something sinful, and ask ourselves if we would still proceed if we were reminded that it was for less than this that the soul was judged an enemy of Christ and a miserable wretch forever. We may not have objects of fear before our eyes, but we have this promise in the word, which is more suitable for ingenuous natures, to be called the friends of God and Christ, "if we do whatsoever he commands us."

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