

# Respond with Obedience

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Date: 20 September 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we are following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which means that everyone needs to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

And that's why we come back week after week and open up our Bibles to hear from God.

Remember that we are looking at the book of 2 Peter, and the book of 2 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD.

And Peter has one hope, one desire, and it's that these people, this church, would grow. And he wants them to grow in two ways. He wants them to grow in grace, and he wants them to grow in knowledge.

[ 1 : 13 ] That's how he ends this letter, the very last verse, in chapter 3, verse 18. He commands them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And of course, as we've seen, that's already his concern at the beginning of the letter.

He wants grace to be multiplied to them. Last week, we looked at the idea of knowledge, and we saw that God uses knowledge. He uses his word as an instrument of his power to play a song of obedience in our lives.

And we saw what that instrument was, at least part of it, and it was God's promises. We looked in verse 4 at his precious and very great promises. And so we're going to continue that today.

This idea of God playing a song of obedience in our lives, if that's true, what is the song that he's playing? What does that song sound like?

We're told in verse 4 from last week that we've escaped from the corruption that's in the world because of sinful desire. Well, if that's true, what does that look like? Of course, the assumption is if we're Christians, there's something different about us.

[ 2 : 20 ] Our lives are changing. God's transforming us. That's what we talked about today in our confession of faith and sanctification, that God is working to make us look more and more like Jesus.

We're going to look at verses 5 through 7, which is what's called a virtue list. It's going to give us a list of characteristics that should be true of Christians. And so we're going to be talking about the idea of obedience.

And as we come to that, of course, there's many different places that we find ourselves. As we've talked about before, some of us are probably cynical when we think about obedience. We see Christians, and yet their behavior seems terrible.

Their faith doesn't seem to make any difference in their lives. Maybe we're not cynical. We've been burned. We see Christians, and it seems to make a tremendous difference in their lives, but in all the wrong ways.

They seem self-righteous and self-possessed. Maybe we consider ourselves Christians, but when it comes to obedience, we're confused or lost. You're not sure how to apply all the things that you see in the Bible to your life.

[ 3 : 26 ] Maybe you're a Christian, but instead of being confused and lost, you're just tired. Maybe you're not sure where to go next in your Christian life.

Or maybe you're a Christian, and you think the idea of obedience is silly because, of course, you know that you're not under law but under grace. It's with all of those questions that we're going to come to this passage and look at what it is that God calls for in our lives as we obey him.

And so I invite you to turn with me now to 2 Peter 1, verse 5. You can turn near the end of your worship guide. You can turn in your phone, or you can turn with me in your Bible.

No matter how you come, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. In other words, God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead he's given us his word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read it now, starting at verse 5. Excuse me, yeah, verse 5. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

[ 5 : 06 ] Our Father in heaven, you have given us your word and you promise us that it's powerful. That it doesn't return to you empty, but it accomplishes your purposes.

And so we ask for that power this morning, that you would use your word to accomplish your purposes in our lives. That you would use it to encourage us and to challenge us.

And most of all, that you would use it to show us Jesus. That you would cast a spotlight on him. And we would understand how wonderful and glorious and worthy he is.

We thank you that we can ask these things, not because we've earned them or deserve them, but because we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. When we come to a list like this, the one that I've just read, of course it can be challenging.

It often makes Christians nervous because when we talk about obedience, about moral virtue, it can be hard to talk about it and also talk at the same time about grace. And it can be hard to talk about grace and at the same time talk about obedience.

[ 6 : 17 ] And you might see a list like this and think, well, this is everything I've always thought about Christianity. It's just this list of rules, right? At the end of the day, no matter what we say, no matter what we study, Christians are people who just want to be do-gooders.

And I don't need that to tell me how to behave correctly, right? Or you're a Christian and you see this list of obedience and you think, man, the Christian life, as I mentioned before, just feels like a treadmill.

These ideas, right, of law and grace are hard to combine. And if you're like me, you've probably listened to a lot of sermons. And you've also probably forgotten most of them.

However, there's one sermon I haven't forgotten that explained to me the idea, the relationship between grace and our obedience that I've never forgotten because it makes so much sense and helped me understand how it is that we bring both of those together.

It came from a pastor of mine in Virginia and he explained it this way. There was a time when he was a father. He's still a father. He was a father of young children and Christmas was coming close.

[ 7 : 23 ] And of course, Christmas is a time, right, when we give gifts to one another. Now, his children were young and so they didn't have any money to buy him a gift.

But that's what you do at Christmas, right? And so as their father, he gave them his money so that they could go and buy him a gift.

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to our obedience and God's grace, God gives us the money. He is the one who funds our obedience. These gifts, right, were bought by these children and they came with joy and the delight to present them to their father.

And he received them with joy and delight, both of them knowing while it was their gift, it was his money. And so it wasn't something that they had built up or saved.

[ 8 : 26 ] It wasn't something that they were able to do on their own, but they did it only with the funds of their father. The same is true of us. When we come to a list like this, when we look at what God asks for us in obedience, we are bringing him gifts that he funds.

Those Christmas presents were 100 percent funded by the father. Our obedience to God is 100 percent funded by our heavenly father.

And if you think that I'm giving you a sentimental illustration to gloss over this list of obedience, you are wrong because we're going to dive in. In verse three here, excuse me, verse five, we are given a buying word.

Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue. This is a Greek word that would have been understood to be a purchasing word. Someone who supplemented was someone who sponsored out of their own account something for someone else.

Think about it this way. If you're in the line at Chick-fil-A and the person ahead of you buys your meal for you, that's the modern equivalent of the ancient Near Eastern supplementing.

[ 9 : 40 ] The Greek supplementing. This is someone who uses resources to buy something. They are sacrificing. They are giving it. This is purchasing language. It's providing something at a cost.

However, we also see it is not our money that we use to supplement. That's also explicit in verse five. We're told at the beginning, for this very reason.

What is for this very reason referring back to? Well, definitely verses three through four, probably verses one through four. In other words, when you're supplementing, you're doing it with the finances that you were given in verses one through four.

Remember, we talked about verse three. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. The father gave all the money that was necessary for the Christmas gifts.

God, our heavenly father, in his divine power has given us everything for obedience. We saw it again in verse four. We talked about last week part of how he funds these precious and very great promises.

[ 10 : 46 ] And so we see at the very beginning of this list of virtues, we are told these are things we purchase with God's power for this very reason.

In other words, God always bankrolls our obedience. God always bankrolls our obedience because, of course, we are bankrupt.

We have nothing that we can use to resource our obedience. We're then also told not just that it's for this reason in verse five, but that we make every effort.

You can imagine these children, right, going out. They've been given the father's money. It would be strange to imagine that they're going to try to end that trip as quickly as possible. Oh, my goodness.

I hate that we have to go and find dad a gift. No, they're going out. They want to pick the perfect thing for him. They want to use his money in the best way possible.

[ 11 : 56 ] They're going to work hard to research the best options. They're going to brainstorm with their siblings about what it is that their father would most enjoy. We live in Olympic City, USA, right?

Olympic athletes put forth every effort. Why? Because they desperately hate the sport that they're participating in. No, they love the sport.

That's why they're showing up day after day. That's why they're getting up at 4 a.m. to go to swim practice. That's why they put in the extra workout, not out of some sense of legalism or duty, but because they love that sport.

The same is true with Christians and their obedience. They make every effort with their father's money because they love him.

It's obedience that is funded by the father. Those who are free from the penalty and the power of sin also want to be free from the presence of sin.

[ 13 : 10 ] They love God and they love his ways. So, of course, our next question then is, what is it? What is it that our father wants?

If these children are going out to buy gifts, there are certain things that certain fathers might want, right? If you're going out and you're buying something and you're in the Franks family, there's only one choice. Soap on a rope.

If you're in the Lawton family, I don't know, you might go out and get some darn tough socks.

Whatever it is, you want to make sure it's something that the father loves, right?

It's something that they want. And some people are harder to buy for than others. God has told us exactly what he wants.

We see that in verses 5 through 7. We're told to add all these things, right? We start with the basis of our faith and we add to it virtue and knowledge and self-control and steadfastness and godliness and brotherly affection and love.

[ 14 : 08 ] God has not left us to wonder what it is that he wants. Now, we might be tempted here to think that things have to go in this order. This is actually a rhetorical device here.

So it's not that we have to have self-control before we can have love. But that we're being given a list here of the various things that characterize the Christian.

Some of these things are general and some of these things are specific. And this morning, I'm going to take a focus here on the specific characteristics that are given.

So, of course, godliness, right? That's a broad category. Self-control, that's a more narrow category. Regardless, this is the Christmas list that Peter gives us.

This is what God wants his children to bring to him. Faith, of course, is the foundation. This is for those who have God as their father, right?

[15:07] This father is not giving out money to other children. He's giving them to his children. And so it makes sense that that would be the foundation. Virtue here is moral behavior. And then we get to knowledge.

Knowledge we've talked about quite a bit. The first several verses of 1 Peter. And in the book, this letter, he's going to focus on a couple things when it comes to knowledge.

He's going to focus on how reliable and true the Bible is. We'll see that later in chapter 1. And then he's going to talk about the fact that Jesus is coming back. He wants them to stay rooted in this knowledge because knowledge and behavior go together.

False teaching and sinful behavior go hand in hand. Now, we'll have plenty of opportunity to talk later about those elements of knowledge.

And so I'll simply do here what Peter is doing, which is reaching back. Remember in verse 5, he says, For this very reason, you're funded by everything I've talked about before. How are we funded?

[16:08] How does God support and empower and enable and pay for our increase in knowledge? Well, one of those ways, as we talked about last week, is his precious and very great promises. And he's already given us one in this passage about knowledge.

Remember, we saw in verse 3 that knowledge is the instrument of his power. So God funds us heading after knowledge through his promise that it's the place where we will find his power. He doesn't send us out without backing us up. He sends us out to knowledge, backing us up with the promise that it's the place of his power. He also tells us here part of what he wants is self-control.

That's what's supposed to be added to virtue. Now, the reason that self-control is so important in this particular book is we're going to find out that these false teachers that they're up against are practicing and teaching the opposite of self-control.

And there's a couple things that these teachers are pushing in particular. We find out that they are greedy. They will do whatever it takes to get money. We also find out that they are teaching sexual license.

[17:22] They're encouraging sexual immorality. We're told later they have eyes for adultery. They're given in constantly to their lusts. And so Peter wants them to know that's not actually what your heavenly father commands.

If you're a Christian, you're going to be someone who values being right and having integrity more than you're going to value money. You're not going to do unethical things just to get ahead.

That is what's going to honor your father. And he has provided the money for it. He's given you a precious and very great promise about that as well.

Hebrews 13 tells us this. Keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have. For he has said, here's the promise, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So we can confidently say the Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me? God calls us to these gifts.

[18:27] He also funds them. The same thing we've talked many times this year about having sexual integrity. That's part of the issue of self-control here. We know God's promise that we talked about in the book of Proverbs.

Matthew 5 verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. God is funding our obedience.

We're told then not just to have knowledge and to have self-control, but then steadfastness.

Steadfastness is a perseverance word. It's actually a military word. Steadfastness is what we would use to describe a soldier who stays in the battle rather than running away.

That's how these people would have understood it. And so as they're faced by false teachers, they persevere. They hold on to what's true. And of course, this has applied not just to that, but to all sorts of situations.

As Christians, when I was growing up, by the way, there was this old saying, When the going gets tough, the tough use duct tape. For the Christian, when the going gets tough, the Christian uses

perseverance.

[ 19 : 37 ] The Christian uses steadfastness. This means that we stay in the battle even when things are hard. We are godly, continuing to hold firm of what God has clearly taught us in his scriptures, even when it's unpopular and despised.

We are godly, continuing to hold firm, teaching our children what is right, even when it's exhausting. We are godly, continuing years of seasons of prayer, even when we don't see results.

That's what steadfastness is about. When the going gets tough, the Christian gets steadfastness. And again, it's not just a command, but it's a command that is fully funded, because we have God's promises.

We're told about perseverance in Matthew chapter 24, that many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. And here's the promise. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And so the Christian has knowledge, self-control, perseverance.

[ 20 : 58 ] And then we find godliness, and is a more general, a broader term. We find with our specific terms here, brotherly affection. Now, you might be surprised whether it's both brotherly affection and love, but brotherly affection is a family word.

And so what Peter is saying is that part of the gifts that you give to your heavenly father is that you treat other Christians like family. Christianity is not just an intellectual exercise.

God never calls someone to himself without also calling that person into the community of his people. We are not here together as a church because it's convenient. We are here together as a church because we don't just worship God one-on-one, but he has called us to worship him as a gathering with other people that we love and live life with.

That's what it means to have brotherly affection. It might be bearing with other Christians who don't hold to our political convictions. It might be sitting with people who are grieving like we would with a brother or a sister.

It might be later when we're gathered under the portico talking to someone we don't really like, just like we would at a family reunion. Christians have brotherly affection.

[ 22 : 20 ] They see other Christians as their family. They come in to meet needs in the way a father or a mother or a brother or a sister would. And God has fully funded it.

Jesus washes his disciples' feet in John 13. He shows them brotherly affection. He treats them even better than family. He acts as their servant, and then he gives them a promise.

He says, If then I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do, just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. And here's the promise. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Brotherly affection. We see and treat other Christians as our family. And then we're told it's not just that.

[ 23 : 26 ] Remember, there's many times in the New Testament where we're told to love other Christians and also those around us, the community. And that's what we're told next. It's not just brotherly affection, but love in general.

Just as we saw in the entire book of 1 Peter, part of our calling as Christians is to show God's love to the world. And so we're not just taking on the hurts of the people in our community, but we're also looking outside our community.

What are the ways that we meet the needs of those who we know? Our family who aren't Christians. Our city. Our neighbors.

And God funds that as well. Because there is a promise. In Matthew 25, we're told about the story of the sheep and the goats.

The sheep are those who have cared for the poor. They visited them in prison. They fed and clothed the hungry and the naked. And Jesus says this, Jesus empowers and funds that obedience by reminding us that when we show love, we are showing it to him.

[ 24 : 42 ] So that's our list. And of course, these funds don't come from nowhere, right? We got supposedly free money earlier this year.

At least \$1,200. If you file taxes, of course, that money is not free, right? Someone has to pay for it. The father who pays for the presents is the one who sacrifices.

And so these things that God funds are free for us, but not for him. We look to Jesus. He is able to purchase, to fund our obedience because of his obedience.

Jesus did everything right. He obeyed. And yet he had to pay as if he were one who did not obey. And so he fills up our accounts, those who have faith in him, so that we are able to pursue obedience.

God gives us what we need for it when instead we deserve his punishment and his wrath. God has given us everything we need. His promises are free for us.

[ 26 : 00 ] They were not free for Jesus. And so we can pursue these things because we're not alone. We are no longer bankrupt because Jesus is our great older brother who gives us everything that we need.

And he's able to do that because he lived a perfect life that we should have lived. And he died a terrible death that we should have died. And so because of his love for us, we are able to respond in love for him.

Of course, that's what we saw in verse 1 of this letter, right?

Jesus is the one who bankrolls these promises with his obedience because we have a faith of equal standing. Verse 1, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are able to obey because Jesus already has and he still died for us. I told you last week, the beginning, that in a previous life, I played violin.

[ 27 : 16 ] Later, I switched to viola and I went on to play in college in the orchestra. And one of the perks of playing in the orchestra is that we would, every January, go on these orchestra tours.

Set up these concerts at various churches and things and we would go and play. There would always be a different destination. They'd have a four-year rotation, so you'd never visit the same place twice. And in January of 2009, the trip was to New York City.

And we'd always try on the way up. You know, we'd do various things. But when we got to whatever city our destination was, the goal was that we would do something fun. So some kind of activity that was funded by the music department.

And this year, we went, of course, this makes complete sense, right? As an orchestra, I'd go listen and hear an orchestra perform. Now, it's been a long time since 2009.

But if I remember correctly, it was the New York Philharmonic, which is one of the best orchestras in the nation, if not the world. And you know, often when there's a performance, people like at the end, the very end, not just to clap, but to stand up.

[ 28 : 20 ] Now, when it comes to standing up, I'll confess to you that I'm a Scrooge. I think it's wildly overdone. I think most of the time, people shouldn't stand up. And I'm a peer pressure stander. So some people stand up because they want to, you know, they want to honor the person.

This person has served for 30 years. Let's all stand up and applaud them. Some people stand up because they want the person who's performing to feel good. They want to show gratitude.

And I'm often, like, in the middle, you know, of the stander uppers. I realize, like, oh, we're doing this. I don't want to be the one guy who's sitting down. So, yes, I'll stand up. I think this is overblown. Most of the time, we just need to clap. And then there are people who stand up because they feel like they have no other choice. They are so moved and propelled by what has just happened that almost without thinking about it, they stand up and they rise.

Now, we're at this concert, right? These are some of the best musicians in the world. And they ended up at the very end closing with one of, if not my favorite piece of orchestra music, which comes from a Russian composer in the 19th century called Pictures at an Exhibition.

[ 29 : 32 ] The man's name is Mozorski. And it's this beautiful piece of Russian romantic music. The concert ends. That's their final piece.

And I decide that I'm going to be the first person to stand up. Because I am so moved. This was not just another performance, right?

This was not just another orchestra playing Pictures at an Exhibition by Mozorski. No, this is the New York Philharmonic. I had no other choice than but to stand.

And after I did, right as it was ending, I don't think I waited until the last note. Other people saw what it was that they needed to do. You know, you've got to set a good example.

Brothers and sisters, When we see God's grace in Jesus Christ, we are compelled and propelled and motivated to give a standing ovation of obedience.

[ 30 : 40 ] It is not something we do out of legalism or guilt. It is something that he gives to us by his grace that he has funded.

And so what does the song of obedience look like? It looks like faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

It is a standing ovation. It is our response to God's grace in Jesus Christ. And so let's pray. Dear Father in heaven, we thank you for your word that gives us your promises.

And we thank you that you're not a God who calls us to anything that you don't enable, that you always fund your commands. We ask that you would make that true of us, that we would see your provision for us and your grace, and that it would motivate us and propel us towards obedience.

We thank you that our standing with you doesn't rest on these things, but instead they rest on the obedience of Jesus Christ. And so we ask them, not based on our performance, but on his. And so we ask them in his name.

[ 31 : 53 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.