

Sermon on the Mount: Christian Response to Personal Injury (Part 2)

by J. Glyn Owen

This sermon emphasizes the Christian call to non-resistance and higher moral standards in response to personal injury.

Duration: 46:07

Scripture: Exodus 21:24, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:27-28, Romans 12:19

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker, Tom Skinner, shares a powerful story about a moment of racial prejudice he experienced. Despite being physically attacked, Skinner responds with love and forgiveness, saying, 'I love you anyway because of Jesus.' He emphasizes the importance of not resisting evil and instead trusting in God's justice. Skinner connects this principle to the message of repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit in the kingdom of God. He also mentions the example of Billy Bray, a Methodist preacher who exemplified this principle in his life.

Transcript

Let us prayerfully turn to the Gospel according to St. Matthew in chapter 5 and we'll read verses 38 to 42 which comprises the passage before us for our meditation this morning. Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 to 42. You have heard that it was said, eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Now we have already considered the early part of this passage.

We have already considered the principle that is laid down here, the basic principle. The law, *lex talionis* as it was called, the law of a just equivalent comes from the Old Testament. It was meant to safeguard people from undue vengeance and retaliation.

And Moses laid down that if in a brawl or a battle you lost one tooth, you could not claim more than one from the person concerned. It was meant to curb vindictiveness. But our Lord proceeds here to say that

the standard for the subjects of his kingdom goes beyond that.

We should live according to that principle as far as it appertains. But we should go beyond that. Our standard is higher, our privileges are greater.

To the heirs of the salvation wrought in the fullness of the times, to those who have received in Christ and by the Spirit a full salvation, the standard goes beyond that implicit in the lex talionis. We should not resist an evil person. But there is another mode of behavior which should always characterize our lives.

Now I think I see this morning a number of visitors among us. And if I'm right, quite a number of you have not been among us before. Let me therefore take the liberty of just briefly giving what is necessarily an introduction to this kind of teaching.

The kind of teaching that we have in this text this morning is not capable of being applied by a non-christian. If you're not committed to the Lord Jesus this morning, I can understand you saying that's another pie in the sky. That is a bit of idealism that simply does not work out in my kind of life.

It's not practicable. I can understand that. But you see this teaching is for men and women who, if I may go back and just take a few leaps as it were, I may go back to chapter 4. This applies to men and women who have repented of their sins, turned to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and trusted him so that their sins are washed away.

And then leaping into chapter 5, missing many things out, these words of our text relate to men and women who've begun to live life according to the principles of the Beatitudes. They're poor in spirit, not proud and arrogant. They've begun to become poor, to mourn for their sins.

They've become meek. They hungered and thirst after righteousness over and above everything else. Not their own will, or their own pleasure, or their own material profit.

They're out for righteousness and purity of heart. And then they see that they have for them in the purpose of God a service to perform in this world. They are salt in society, they are light in the world.

Now I can't go further this morning, or we'll be going back over old territory, and I can see some of my congregation walking out and saying, well we've heard that so many times. But you see the point I want to make is this, when we come to this text there's a background to it. And if you feel that really this is, this is something too vague and impossible for me, may I suggest to you that you go back to chapter 4, and you read the message of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

Repent, for the kingdom, the rule of heaven has come, and the power of heaven has come down to earth in the person of the Lord Jesus, and later by the power of the Holy Spirit. And God has made available for the subjects of his kingdom a power that is capable of elevating life to the levels enunciated here. Now that's the background.

And therefore if you want to join the saints of God, repent, believe, receive the Savior and the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God, and in the fellowship which emerges out of that, there is power, there is grace. You can do things that the man who is not a Christian, the woman who is not a believer, simply couldn't even dream about. Now that's the context.

Now last time as I indicated, we were dealing with the principle. And some of you may rightly have thought that I'd left you dangling in mid-air, because we dealt with the principles, whereas we didn't get on to the four illustrations of the principle that Jesus himself gave. And that's what I want to get back to this morning.

There are four principles which enunciate the principle, or illustrate it. Let me read again. Here's the principle.

Do not resist an evil person. May I pause also to say to those who are with among us for the first time, or only infrequently, that this especially applies in personal relationships. This is not addressed to governments, this is not addressed to rulers in the land.

The rod of righteousness, the rod of rule is put into the hands of the state to deal with men and women on the basis of righteousness. This on the contrary is something that relates between person and person, and personal relationships. And this is the rule.

Do not resist an evil person. And here are the illustrations. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

How does this principle relate? How are we to turn the other cheek? Well literally and metaphorically. Both, not either or, both and. Now let's look at this.

I want to take these four illustrations, and though we may not spend as much time on one as the other, we must look very seriously at this first at any rate. Jesus says that we must learn to refrain from physical retaliation, when we are physically molested. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Now you see what Jesus is doing don't you? He's applying the principle as we've said. He's applying the principle enunciated in the first place, to a matter of retaliation when we are physically molested. The world of ancient Palestine two thousand years ago was not all that different from the world of Toronto and North America today.

People slap each other, people hit each other, people are unkind to one another, people kill. And when Jesus referred to this, he was referring to something that was happening. And it's happening today, I don't need to tell you.

There's a peculiar danger here, a peculiar danger against which Jesus warns in the text that we are considering. And it arises very especially if we have the physical power, the physical power and the occasion to retaliate. Now not all of us have that.

We may be slapped in the face and we can do nothing whatsoever about it. And you might say well poor me, I'm not so sure that the Lord Jesus would say that. He says that he is in danger who has the capacity, who has the power to hit back.

And the word of our text of this first application applies particularly to the man or the woman who's got the capacity to strike back in kind. Yours is the danger. Your danger is your strength, not your weakness.

And you see the only safety that some people know in society is their ability to strike back physically. Now I've no vested interest in this, but this is about the only safety that some people know. If they're strong, if they've got big muscles and biceps and they've engaged in this technique and that, that they can chop somebody on the neck, you know, I don't need to go through it do I? And this is the only safety.

It's not safe in this world. And so karate is the only answer. Says Jesus for the child of God that subjects, oh well learn your karate if you like, but that's not your defense.

It is no defense in the long run. And even if you are capable, he says don't do it. Here then is no unimaginable and impossible dream.

Jesus is dealing with a real situation and it obtains today as it did 2,000 years ago. You can be slapped on the cheek and you will be tempted to strike back. But now there's more than that to it here.

Implicit in the illustration our Lord gives, there is not only the notion of the physical assault, but of a personal insult. It may be unrecognized by those who are unfamiliar with a contemporary situation, but believe me, along with the physical assault envisaged here, there is also this considerable insult implied. Means, let me ask you to look at it this way.

A right-handed person, I must be careful now, I'm not meaning to say anything about our left-handed brothers and sisters, or to distinguish and say one is first class and the other is second class. Now please, okay. But I think the majority of people are right-handed.

Now, for a right-handed person facing someone to hit that person on the right cheek, how can he do it? See, I'm looking at you and you're looking at me. You want to smack my right cheek, it's this one. Well you see, your right hand is over there.

How can you hit me on my cheek, my right cheek, with your right hand? There's only one way of doing it, with the back of the hand. And in rabbinic and Jewish thought, this was the chiefest insult in public. Now hit a man with the other side of the hand, well that was an insult, of course.

And that was a physical injury. But the real insulting thing to do is to bring the back of your hand across the face, and you are, as it were, getting rid of the off-scourings of society. That's the notion.

Paul refers to it in one of his epistles. You're being slapped away with the back of the hand as useless and worthless. Thus the provocation to retaliate, you see, is even greater than if it were a simple matter of having been hit on the face.

The episode was a calculated injury to one's pride as well as one's physical sensitivity. And if I know anything, hurt pride hurts more than a hurt cheek. You know what happens when pride is hurt.

You know what pride is, don't you? Anybody here doesn't know what pride is? You know, you shouldn't do that to me. Me, if you'd done it to somebody else, it wouldn't be so important. But I'm the center of God's universe.

I'm far more important than you. Why should you do that to me, of all things, of all people? That's pride. And if you are in the center of your own little world, thinking of yourself, coddling yourself, wanting to keep yourself safe and intact from all the scratches of life, and then to be hit on the face, and then to be insulted in this way, well, it's not only your body's hurt, but there's something boiling inside of you and saying, I'll

get him back.

If you can't do it physically, you'll think of another way. Says Jesus, those who have repented of their sin, those who have received the Messiah and the chrism of his Spirit, and those who have begun to move on the level of the Beatitudes, and perhaps got a little deeper than they did the first time they considered them, who are becoming poorer and poorer in spirit, who weep more and more on account of their sins, who become more and more meek, who thirst more and more after righteousness, whose hearts are becoming purer and purer, they mustn't fall to this temptation. Now, my friends, you don't need to tell me.

I know that this is a very elevated standard. You and I have never lived up to this standard in its glory and in its totality, not one of us. But alongside of that, let me tell you that the thrust of this teaching began when Jesus said in verse 20, except your righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees and the scribes, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God.

And part of the righteousness of the kingdom of God is that we learn to be more careful of God's glory and God's will than of our own comfort and self-esteem. This needs divine grace, especially if we have the power to retaliate. I read from 1 Peter 2 this morning because I wanted you to see that it's not that Jesus said something here that the Apostles didn't take up and was not important enough to repeat.

I've read from 1 Peter chapter 2 because I wanted you to hear these words. If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called.

Who was called? All the saints addressed by Peter. It's as universal as the saints are universal. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

And what is the example that he has left us to follow? Here it is. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.

When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, and this is the alternative, we shall come to that in a moment, instead he entrusted himself to him who judges righteously or justly. The alternative to hitting back lies here.

I'm going ahead of myself, but here it is. Let's notice it now. The alternative is this.

Do you know God? And do you know that God is just? And do you know that God will rectify things and straighten them out sooner or later? He will vindicate his people and he will set the crooked straight. This is the answer my friend. It's not hitting back, it's trusting God.

Now this same attitude has manifested itself in the life of our Lord Jesus supremely, was also one of the main features in the commending of the gospel to the ancient world, the early world of Christian times. And right down to this day and age. I've been reading a number of the commentators to see what they would have to say about this passage.

And it's amazing how many of them refer to their favorite illustration of this principle. Dr. Lloyd-Jones in his commentary refers to the famous Cornishman Billy Bray. Methodists will know him.

He built more churches in the west of England than the great John Wesley. Founded more churches I should say. Billy Bray was a great man of God, but you know when Billy Bray was saved he was a pugilist.

Not only was he a pugilist, but he was a very rough diamond. And no man was safe when Billy Bray had more than a pint of beer over his lips. And Billy Bray could make mincemeat of three or four men.

But though probably one of the most tried and tested men after his conversion, it is said that he never raised his hand to any man or woman. Now to say that here, it doesn't bring out the significance of it, unless you really know the man and know the history. Lloyd-Jones says that this is one of the greatest illustrations he knew.

I guess my wife and I had the privilege of knowing one man who to my mind was even more significant. And more of an illustration of the principle then, and perhaps Billy Bray. When I first met this man, Evan Davis, he was somewhere around sixty years young.

Is that the way you put it? Sixty years of age. And he had spent most of his time in prison. Twice he had been charged with manslaughter and a number of times for disturbing the peace and what not.

He stood somewhere above six foot three inches high, and he was well over 350 pounds in weight. And it took five police officers in the Rumba Valley to get him under control when he was on the go. And believe it or not, one night he was in a in a tavern, and the Salvation Army came outside.

It was a summer's evening, and the window was open. And as they do sometimes in Britain, if the other facilities are appropriate, they will hold a little service even outside a tavern. You don't know who's inside, but there was this young little Salvation Army lass, a little stripling of a girl about 17 or 18.

And here she was standing on a box, an orange box, and she was telling the telling people inside and outside that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses all sin away. And Evan Davis put down his pint of beer, went out through the door, and he got hold of the girl as if she was a little bit of a rabbit. And he lifted her up from the floor, and looking her eyeball to eyeball, she said, What are you talking about, girl, lassie? And with her feet dangling from the earth, she said to him, Sir, she says it's true.

And she was nearly throttled, but he let her drop. But those words, Sir, it's true, shot him spiritually. And he couldn't move.

And two of the officers took him around the corner, and there on the on the street, Evan Davis came to Christ. Now, I knew him about 18 months after that. You know, he had the voice of the roar of a lion before he was converted.

I never heard him lift his voice. The first time I met him, he was taking kids home, boys and girls who had been in a scripture union camp, a day camp by the seaside. He was taking them home in his car.

And there was a home for elderly people, and he was taking the aged ladies home in his car. And here he was, this gentle, calm, quiet, gracious, Christ-honoring man. His whole energies had been harnessed, and something altogether different had come into his life.

This side of the Atlantic, you have such men as Tom Skinner, and most of you know about him. Tom Skinner, at the time of his conversion, was the leader of the largest and toughest teenage gang in New York City, called Harlem Lords, isn't it? Harlem Lords, that's right. But the day after his conversion, when it had dawned on him what Christ had done for him, Tom Skinner said, I'm quitting.

And he had difficulty to get out. It was nearly a fight to get away. But he quit, and he began to preach.

And the only thing he could do was to tell men and women, black and white, especially his fellow blacks, of what Christ had done for him, in a moment, in a day, in an hour. It was just three days afterwards, I believe it's James Boyce, Dr. James Boyce who says this, I think. It was about three or four days afterwards, he was playing a game of football, and a lad whom he had successfully blocked, a white boy, later came back to him and so hit him in the stomach that Tom Skinner bent over in anguish.

And when he was bending over, he had a chop on the back of the neck that nearly sent him to the stars. He still had regained consciousness, and the boy was pouring out jibes upon him there. And the last thing that Tom Skinner heard as he was coming to was this man speaking to him in these words, you dirty black nigger, I'll teach you.

And he kicked him again in the stomach and run away. And Tom Skinner, who would normally have pulverized him, then or later, had enough energy to call to him, hey, he said, hi, he said, I love you anyway because of Jesus. He's only four days old.

I love you anyway, he says, because of Jesus. And this is the end of the story. After the game was over, this guy comes back to Tom and he says, Tom, you've done more to knock prejudice out of my soul today by telling me that you love me than you would have if you'd sucked my jaw right in.

What am I getting at? What I'm getting at, my friends, is this, that there is something of the grace of God exhibited and the reign of God exhibited when you and I can control this desire for revenge, whether it's to hit a man physically or in some other way to get our own back. And Jesus says this is the way for the subjects of his kingdom. This is the way.

Now this is not unrelated to the question of war and peace, but I can't go after that this morning. That's a subject all its own. Let me sum up what I want to say about this first point by quoting to you from John Stott.

To sum up the teaching of this antithesis, says Stott, Jesus was not prohibiting the administration of justice, but rather forbidding us to take the law into our own hands. An eye for an eye is a principle of justice belonging to courts and law. In personal life we must be rid of not only all retaliation in word and deed, but of all animosity of spirit.

We can and must commit our cause to the good and righteous judge, as Jesus himself did. But it is not for us to seek or to desire any personal revenge. We must not repay injury, but suffer it, and so overcome evil with good, as Paul says.

So the command of Jesus not to resist evil should not properly be used to justify either temperamental weakness, or moral compromise, or political anarchy, or even total pacifism. Instead, what Jesus here demands of all his followers is a personal attitude to evildoers, which is prompted by mercy, not justice. Which renounces retaliation so completely, as to risk further costly suffering, which is governed never by the desire to cause them harm, but always by the determination to serve their highest good.

Now come to the second illustration. I shall probably have to stop with this. We must learn to make legal action against us wholly unnecessary.

Verse 40, And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. Now though it is not specifically stated, it may be reasonably assumed that the cause why someone is here envisaged as taking another to law, is because of the non-payment of the debt. Now that's not specifically

statement, but the terms are such they seem to reflect that kind of situation.

Christians were generally poor in our Lord's day. Their association with him often cost them everything. We've referred to Peter's first epistle.

He was writing to a people who had lost their homes, lost their jobs, lost the prospect of everything material. He addresses them as the sands scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. There they are, like a crowd of sheep that have been scattered.

And that was generally the case. Thus it is quite feasible that unable to pay debts incurred, a Christian might be brought before the magistrate, where a creditor would demand his tunic for goods rendered. And it's a very sad background.

Now the tunic, the chiton, was a person's, not exactly his undergarment, but next to the undergarment. Maybe the undergarment in ancient times, but not necessarily so. It would correspond to the lady's dress, or to a man's suit.

It's not the garment above everything, it's the second layer, as it were. In normal circumstances, most Jews in our Lord's day would have at least one change of costume, or of tunic. Many, of course, would have more than one.

But most people, however poor, would have two tunics, and they could change from the one to the other. So that one might reasonably be expected to surrender one tunic, perhaps in order to pay up one's debt. But Jesus says that at the suggestion of being thus taken to court, somebody's trying to take away this undergarment.

He says that a subject of his kingdom should not only surrender his tunic, but also his cloak. Now the cloak was something of the kind of our overcoat. Only, you see, it was more than that.

During the day it was worn to keep the cold out, but it was also the blanket during the night. It was thick, it was heavy, and very few Jews would have more than one. But you see what Jesus is saying? You see what Jesus is saying? He is saying that if somebody takes you to court, to the court, because he wants to take your undergarment away, the cheaper one, the lighter one, look, he says, don't let him take you to court and go into a squabble and a battle there.

He says, let him have your cloak also. Now this is very significant, because you see, in the Old Testament, in Exodus 22, verses 26 to 27, we read these words. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body.

I told you, it was his blanket. What else will he sleep in? This is the Scripture, this is Exodus. When he cries out to me, says the Lord, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

And that is another way of saying, look, if you take a man's cloak away, I'll see that you have to pay for it. God is compassionate. Even so, Jesus here insists that subjects of his realm must never so oppress their rights, even in a perfectly legal possession, as even to their perfectly legal possessions, as to make such litigation necessary.

Says Jesus, somebody wants your undergarment. Don't argue and say, well I can't do it, you mustn't have it, or I have this reason or that reason. He says, look, he says, if he is bent on that kind of thing, rather

than make a fuss and have an argument and a quarrel and spoil human relationships, let him have the big, the outer cloak as well, to which he has no right, save at the most for a few hours during one day, and bring it back before sunset.

What he's saying is this, look, rather than quarrel with somebody else, surrender your rights, even the things that you have rights to according to the Scriptures. Now you see, this is where, this is something that touches us right on the raw, isn't it? We talk about our rights to this and our rights to that, and we clamor for our rights, rights, rights, rights, rights. Says Jesus, subjects of my kingdom have surrendered their rights to me, haven't you, brother, sister? You call yourself a Christian? Who has sovereign rights in your life? You say it, the Lord knows what you're saying.

As a subject of my kingdom, says Jesus, there is something more important than the pressing even for your own rights. Personal relationships must be respected. You must never drive wedges between you and people.

The other person, even though he's a blaggard, was made after God's image, and God may want to love him through you, and save him through you, and bring him into the kingdom through you. And you must express God's life before that awful man, or that awful woman. You are put there, you are placed there, as a subject of the kingdom, to show him the kingdom's life, and love, and liberty.

And it's only by doing that, that you can bring him in. You got it? Now, this is not to say that the state cannot have police, a police force, and the state cannot have troops. But this is to say that in personal relationships, you and I have never to separate from men, and even the most difficult people to get on with, who will strike you on the cheek, or take away your cloak.

Don't argue about it. There's something more important than getting my cloak, even if I get a cold without clothes on my bed. It's the extension of the kingdom.

Jesus is king. It's the extension of the kingdom of God. And you see, when we come to the end of chapter 6, Jesus will say this, seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these other things I've talked about, they'll be given to you.

I'll deal with a man who hits you on the cheek. I'll deal with a man who's stolen your undergarment, or your upper garment, or whatever it is. I'll sort all these things out, and every need of yours I will supply.

Now I end. Oh, is this practicable? Well, I've already indicated. It's only practicable for people who come the way of the Beatitudes, who repent of their sins, who accept Jesus as a Savior, and who begin to experience that they're poor in spirit, humble, and who begin to mourn for their sins, and to become meek, and to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and so forth.

It is only people who live on that level can possibly come here. You ask me why, and I'll tell you, because that is the way to a real, living, ever-deepening knowledge of God. That's why.

And fundamentally, you see, it's only the man or the woman who knows God as God, that can surrender his or her right, and tell the guy who wants the undergarment, take the other one as well. My God will look after me. You see, many of us can't say that, because we don't know God like that, and we've got to fight for it, because we don't know anybody else who will.

If I don't fight for my right, who will? Poor me. You see, I'm a pagan at that point, but if I know God, a God of justice, in His own time, He will straighten things out. He'll see to my needs.

You see, this is why Jesus will ultimately put the capstone on this kind of teaching, and He will say there's something like this. He says, take a lesson from the birds of the air, the sparrows. They're so cheap, you can buy a couple of them for a half a penny.

But He says, there's not a sparrow that falls without my knowing it and taking note of it. Aren't you of much more value than a sparrow? Or look at it, look at the lily of the field. It grows today, so attractive, so wonderful, but tomorrow it's vanished, and it has to be thrown into the... Oh, you of little faith.

He says, don't you believe that the one who closed the lily of the field just for a day cannot close you? Let your cloak go, man. He'll close you, if you know Him. But you see, the way to know Him is via the Beatitudes, and obedience to Him, and service to Him.

Refer to in chapter 5. Now, if I were able this morning, you know how I'd like to put to end. I can't do it, of course, but I'd like to sing to you, send you all away, and frighten you. Any of you ever heard Ethel Waters, the American Negress, sing a sparrow? Put your hands up.

Praise the Lord. I want one of you to give me either a record or a tape. I want to hear it.

Because, whisper it, Martin Gaff, but I've been reading her biography recently, and I'd like to hear her sing this. You know it was her favorite. On the stage, even when she was a backslider, this was her favorite.

Why should I feel discouraged? And why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely away from home, and from heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. My constant friend is He. For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

You know that? You can't turn the other cheek unless you know that. You can't give your cloak away unless you know that. But if you know that, my friend, you've got the answer.

You've got the key to the Sermon on the Mount. Not only the understanding of it, but the application of it. I sing because I'm happy.

I sing because I'm free. I'm not worshipping mammon. I'm not worshipping myself.

I'm not out for my own rights. I sing because I'm free, and because my concern is His glory and His kingdom. He look after me.

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me, even me. Hallelujah. There's someone here who's a stranger to Him.

Come near to Him today. You may never have a better opportunity. He is seeking men and women to know Him.

Our God wants you to know Him like this. That's why He's written a book, the Bible, to tell us about Himself. Come to Him.

We don't often make an altar call here. Maybe this morning there are some who would benefit from that. You might like to walk down the frontier to indicate, today you're coming to the Lord like that, to begin to

walk with Him, in a way that will lead to this ongoing, deepening knowledge of Him, that will enable you to surrender trivial things, because you have Him.

I shall not make an extended invitation, but as we sing our last hymn this morning, I shall come and stand there by the communion table. If you feel this is the right thing to do, come and let the congregation know and pray for you. But whether you come or not, may this be a day when you recognize that life consists in the knowledge of God.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, really we have prayed to You, even as we've uttered these words from the pulpit or heard them in the pew. For You know how our hearts have been taking over, how our thoughts have been crystallizing, our objections have been raised, or alternately, how we have been pleased to know the truth in order to obey it.

Help us now, crisply within our own souls, to acknowledge the truth, and to ask for Your help. And if this is a day when You are calling some of us to trust You as our God and our Savior for the first time, to set out in life as those who trust You, please, Lord, call, call effectively, call mightily, call such persons, young and old, to You. But confirm in the heart of every believer convictions that have grown up by Your grace and Spirit, under the ministry of Your Word, here or elsewhere, confirm in us the fact that Your calling to us is high because Your privilege, the privilege You've given us, is so great.

And the ability to obey accompanies the command to obey. Hear us in Jesus' name.

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