

## The Free Obedience Of Christ

**Robert Murray M'Cheyne:**

The death of Christ is, my friends, the most wonderful event past, present, or future in the whole universe. It is so in the eye of God - 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.' There is nothing in the whole world so lovely as his Son. It is not only for his Godhead, but on account of his manhood, through which he laid down his life - 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.' These words of Christ, 'I lay down my life', are dearer to God than a thousand worlds.

It is the same in the eyes of the redeemed. All the redeemed love Christ, because he laid down his life. John says:

I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain ... And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood - Revelation 5:6-9. And again they sing:

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing - Revelation 5:12.

Still, brethren, you see that it is the death of Christ that is the joy of the new Jerusalem.

And, still further, the death of Christ is the greatest wonder in hell. This was one thing which Satan did not know the meaning of - the death of Christ. Ah! Satan thought when he got Judas to betray him - that he had gained the victory; but ah! Satan hath found it out now, that Christ has triumphed over him in his cross. Ah! then, brethren, Calvary is a wonder in hell.

Tell me then, brethren, who is it in all the universe that thinks little of Christ's laying down his life. Shall we find them in heaven? No. Shall we find them in hell? No; 'they believe and tremble'. Where, then, shall we find the man that thinks little of Christ? O Christless sinner! it is you. 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness' - I Corinthians 1:23. 'For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness - I Corinthians 1: 18). O Christless man! you little think of the death of Christ; even the devils do not think it foolishness. Sinner, do not you think there must be something wrong about the state of your mind, that sees no beauty in the death of Christ?

From these words I would notice:

(1) The awful command here spoken of. 'This commandment have I received of my Father.'

(2) The free obedience of Christ: 'I lay down my life.'

(3) The father's love to Christ: 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.'

The awful command here spoken of, verse 18, at the end, 'This commandment have I received of my Father.'

This passage shows us plainly that the death of Christ was arranged beforehand by the Father and the Son. The Father laid it upon him that he should come into the world and lay down his life. Some may say, When did God lay this command upon him? I answer, it was before the world was. 'But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory' - I Corinthians 2:7. And then his purpose in grace, before the world began, was to send his Son; so that there can be no doubt that this command was given to Christ at the beginning, when there was no sea or land, when there was neither sun nor moon. It was before the world was that the Father said, Go into the world and lay down your life.

'This commandment have I received of my Father.' Brethren, this command was not given by sinners; there was no cry, Come over and help us. The world was steeped in sin. There was a cry for vengeance rising up from earth to heaven; but there was no cry for mercy. 'This commandment have I received from my Father.' The world did not desire that Christ should die. It was altogether become unprofitable, there was none that did good, no not one. All were lying under wrath.

You will notice that this is the very command we find spoken of in Psalm 40:7, 8: 'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the

volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God.' Compare this with Hebrews 10:7, 10. You will notice that the 'will' here spoken of in the 40th Psalm, and the command spoken of in Hebrews 10, is the very same that is spoken of in the 10th of John. My dear brethren, this lays open to you the great and amazing truth that the Father loves sinners. You know we often speak of the love of Christ; but here is a new object of love. It was the Father that sent the Son - it was the Father that provided the sacrifice.

Learn this solemn truth that the Father loves you, the Father wants you to be saved, the Father wants you to believe on the Son; the very Father who commanded Christ to lay down his life for sinners. You will notice from this that the Father is clear from the blood of all men. He does not want you to perish. 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' He is not willing that any should perish. He 'will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2:4). He does not want you to perish. He commands Christ to go into the world, and lay down his life for sinners. Oh! it is true: the Father does not want you to perish. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved' - John 3:16-17. God the Father is as earnest in your salvation as Christ is. It was God's part to send the Son, and the Son's part to come and die. And as God the Son has done his part, so God the Father has done his. So that, sinners, if you perish, it is because you will not come to him, that you may have life.

The free obedience of Christ. 'I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.'

Brethren, there is nothing more certain than that no man can lay down his life for another. But you will observe, there were two things that made it right in Christ to lay down his life: (a) he is the Lord of all; (b) the Father gave him a commandment to lay it down. 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

And you will notice from this that in laying down his life, he was not forced to do it. This is brought out in the example of Isaac. You remember that God commanded Abraham to take Isaac his son, and to go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering; but you will notice that Isaac was a young man, and his father an old man, so that, had he wanted, he could have resisted his being bound - Genesis 22:1-19. Now, brethren, this was intended to be a type of Christ. It is true that men bound him, but it is also true that he laid down his life himself. Observe, first, that no man forced it from him.

If you read the life of Christ, you will observe that he often escaped out of their hands. You remember, at Nazareth, they tried to cast him over the hill on which the city was built, but he passed through the midst of them and escaped - Luke 4:16-30. And so, brethren, he could have done this to the very end. He could have escaped that very night. When he saw them at a distance, coming down the hill with their torches, he could have fled; but he would not. 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' - John 18:11. And you will notice that when they came to the garden he said, 'Whom seek ye?' and they said, 'Jesus'; he said, 'I am he', and they fell backward - John 18:4-6. He could have escaped then, but he would not. 'He, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God' - Hebrews 9:14. And even when he was nailed to the tree, when they said to him, 'Let him come down from the cross and we will believe him' - Matthew 27:42, he could have come down, but Jesus wanted to die; this is the reason.

And, brethren, this statement is true in regard to the Father, no man taketh it from me'. Not even the Father took it from him. The Father said, 'Go into the world, and lay down your life for sinners'. And we are told in Isaiah 53:12: 'He shall divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death.' And it is said in Luke 23:46: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'; he did it freely to God. So he said, 'Lo, I come freely to do thy will.' It is true, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, but he put himself into the hands of divine justice.

Dear brethren, from this let us learn two things:

(a) The justice of this act. There are many persons who say that it is not just for an innocent person to die for the wicked; but this is an extraordinary case. The Father was willing to take Christ as the substitute, so it is in perfect accordance with law and justice.

(b) The love of Christ to sinners. Here is his love: 'I lay down my life, no man taketh it from me,, and yet he laid it down. Christ put himself into the hands of justice. He said, 'Lo, I come to do thy will.' O brethren! this is the free love of Christ. That command was written upon his heart, 'Die for sinners! "I lay down my life.' Ah! sinner, 'scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' - Romans 5:7-8.

Sinner, this is the love of Christ that he came for such as you and me.

The Father's love to Christ: 'Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life'

I do not know any word in the Bible that is more sweet to meditate on than the love of the Father to the Son. There are many things that induce the Father to love the Son. He loved him for his Godhead. But here is another reason why the Father loves the Son - he loves him for his holy manhood. 'He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners' - Hebrews 7:26. God never saw anything so like himself. When God made Adam, he said, 'It is very good'; but oh! when he saw Jesus, he saw a loveliness in him such as he never saw in any created thing.

But here is another reason why the Father loves him: 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.' We are told that he grew in favour both with God and man - Luke 2:52. He was every day fulfilling a part of his holy obedience, until he came to the last, and then the Father saw obedience as he had never seen it before. Oh, brethren! it was love that was never seen before, that he should die for the lowest for the vilest. And that appears to be another reason why Jesus died: it is, that the Father got a vent for his love to flow out to sinners: 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.'

From all this, dear brethren, learn:

(a) Though a child of God carries the cross, he may be under the love of God. Never did God love Christ so much as when he was heaping wrath upon him - 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.' And, oh, brethren! so it often is with a saint. Often God puts a cross upon a child of God, and then takes it off, and lets us sing, 'I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God' - Psalm 42:11.

(b) Learn how sinners are to come into the love of God. Dear friends, I have often pleaded with you to come into the love and peace of God; but you may say, I do not know how to come; then, listen - the Father loves you because Jesus has finished the work. Come! O believe on him, and you will be brought into the love of God! Amen.