

## *A Word for All Roman Catholics*

Are you a Roman Catholic? You are? In that case, as I understand it, you think very highly of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Am I right? You treasure her words. If she told you to do something, you would do it, wouldn't you? Am I right? You wouldn't quarrel with what she said? You wouldn't quibble about it?

Very well.

One day, Mary and Jesus were guests at a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Unfortunately, there was a hitch in the celebrations. But Mary knew that her son, the Lord Jesus Christ, could solve the problem and put matters right. So she said to those concerned: 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5). Excellent advice! What a sensible command. 'Do whatever *he* tells you'. That is what Mary said. And her words come down the centuries, and come to you now. And you say you think very highly of her, and wouldn't dream of quibbling with anything she told you to do. Well... her command still stands. She says it to you now. Speaking to you about the Lord Jesus Christ, she says: 'Do whatever *he* tells you'.

Do you? Do you do what she said? Do you follow Mary's advice and do whatever Jesus commands you? If not, your claim to think highly of Mary isn't worth much, after all, is it?

'What Jesus says, whatever Jesus tells you to do'. That's what we are talking about. Let me remind you of one or two things Jesus has commanded us to do; things he has commanded *me* to do, things he has commanded *you* to do.

Jesus was a preacher. And Mark recorded for us the first command that Jesus, as a preacher, ever gave to sinners. Here it is: 'Repent, and believe the good news' (Mark 1:15). And Jesus still commands sinners to repent.

He commands you to repent. And since Mary told you to do whatever Jesus tells you to do, may I ask you if you have repented?

What does it mean to repent? It does not mean 'do penance'. Certainly not! In the Bible, you will never come across Jesus – or anybody else – telling sinners to do *that!* No! When he commands you to repent, he means that you should recognise and admit that you are a sinner. That is, admit that you are living your life the way you want to live it – admit that you will not take any notice of what God says. In fact, you defy him, and live to please and serve yourself. And this inward defiance, this self-will, shows itself in sinful thoughts, words and deeds. These are called sins.

You have to repent. That is, you have to recognise and admit that you think and speak and act in this way. You have to admit this to yourself. Even more important, you have to admit it to God. Further, you have to be sorry for the offence you are to God because of your sin. Above all, you must not only be sorry for it, you have to turn from your sin, change the direction in which you are going, and start submitting to God. When Jesus commands you to repent, this is what he commands you to do. The first thing Jesus tells you to do as a sinner is to repent and turn back to God.

Have you done it? No? You have not admitted to God that you are a sinner, that you are sorry for it, and want to change? Will you do it, now? No? Then remember what Mary said. Do whatever the Lord Jesus tells you. That is what she said. Yet, even though Mary tells you to obey Jesus, and Jesus commands you to repent, you won't do it? Really?

Notice the second thing which Jesus commands: 'Repent, and believe the good news'. Note his words: 'Believe the good news'. What good news is that? The good news in question is the gospel – gospel literally

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means ‘good news’. Jesus commands you to believe the gospel, the good news.

Listen to some of this good news: ‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’ (Matt. 1:21). That’s good news, isn’t it? Do you believe it?

‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ (1 Timothy 1:15). That’s good news, isn’t it? I’m a sinner. You’re a sinner. We are all sinners. And Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That must be good news. Do you believe it?

‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved’ (Acts 16:31). That’s good news! Do you believe it?

Again: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ... cleanses... from all sin’ (1 John 1:7). Now that’s good news. Do you believe it?

And just one more: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16). Do you believe *that*?

Jesus commands you to believe the good news. And, don’t forget, Mary told you to ‘do whatever he tells you’. So... do you believe the gospel?

But Jesus not only commands us to repent and believe the gospel. He invites you – he commands you – to come unto him – to trust him, to call upon him, to rely upon him. If you do, he promises that he ‘will give you rest’ (Matt. 11:28). Now do you trust Christ like that? Are you trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to wash you from your sins in his blood, and give you peace with God? If not, why not? You say you think highly of Mary, and you wouldn’t quarrel with a word she said – well then, she commands you: ‘Do whatever he tells you’. Now he commands you to come to him and if you do he will save you from your sins and give

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you rest. Yet you admit you haven't done it. You have not followed Mary's advice.

Above all you have disobeyed Christ. His condemnation of you, therefore, is just: 'You are not willing to come to me that you may have life'; that is, 'you refuse to come to me to have life' (John 5:40).

And yet all the while, as a Roman Catholic, you say you think very highly of Mary! I think your actions – in refusing to come to Christ – speak louder than your words!

And while I am reminding you – or telling you – of things Jesus said, let me tell you something Jesus *never* said. *He never told anyone to pray to his mother, Mary. Never! He never told anyone that Mary would save them from their sins. Never!* Oh, I know the Pope and some others tell you to pray to Mary, and that she will help in your redemption. *But it is all a lie.* A whopping lie. A dreadful, wicked lie. She herself told you to do what Jesus says, didn't she? *And he never says that we should pray to Mary or ask her to forgive our sins.* So... will you stop doing it?

And that leads me to another thing I would like you to remember about Mary. She not only said those wise words we have been looking at. She also sang a song of praise to God. Listen to her opening words in that song: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour' (Luke 1:46-47). That is what Mary said.

Her words are very interesting, are they not? The Roman Church – your Church – claims that Mary was sinless. But that is clearly not true. Not to put too fine a point on it, the claim is nonsense. Mary certainly never claimed it for herself. Indeed, she expressly stated that she was a sinner and needed salvation – and that God in his grace had saved her. 'My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour', she said. '*My* Saviour', I emphasise. So she must have been a sinner, mustn't she? On her own admission, she was a sinner like everybody else (apart from the Lord

Jesus Christ himself, of course). What is more, because she needed to be saved, she can never redeem others, can she? The only one who can save sinners is the sinless Lord Jesus Christ. Mary needed to be saved. She can't save anybody!

What is more, since she told us to do whatever Jesus tells us to do, and since he commands us to repent and believe the gospel, and to come to him to be saved – well, then, we know how God saved *her*. She repented, she believed the gospel, and she trusted Christ and his precious blood to wash away her sins. She was not sinless – she was a sinner saved by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, my friend, if you really do think highly of Mary, will you not take her advice and do whatever Jesus commands you? Will you not repent, believe and trust him to save you? And will you not join Mary and rejoice in the Lord who has saved you from your sins? If not, I say it yet again, your words about Mary may be very warm – *but they don't amount to much, do they?* In fact, your words are empty. It's just talk – nothing more. Why not put your words into action – and take Mary's excellent advice and obey Christ? Why not start now?

Thank you for listening to what I have had to say. But do let Mary's words echo in your heart, I plead with you. More – I urge you to do whatever the Lord Jesus Christ tells you. In particular, since he tells you to repent of your sin, to believe the good news, and to trust him for your salvation, do it. Do it now! If you do, then like Mary, you will be able to rejoice in Christ your Saviour.

If you do not, I tell you upon the authority of Christ's own word, you will perish: 'Unless you repent, you will... perish'. Christ said so. And he said it twice in quick succession (Luke 13:3-5). To 'perish' is to suffer eternal torment. I am telling you the truth! But there is no need for you to perish. Listen to the Lord Jesus once again: 'God so

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loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God' (John 3:16,18). So don't delay. You dare not delay. Trust Christ now!