

**Find Life in the Son:
The Heart of Unbelief
John 5:41-47**

Introduction

Today we reach the conclusion of the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leadership over His healing an invalid of 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Jesus did not conform to the manmade additions to the fourth commandment, and when the Jews took exception to His violation of their Sabbath day rules, He went further yet, claiming His work was the Father's work, making Himself equal with God.

So John 5 provides for us a Christology that Jesus Himself delivered regarding His identity and mission. He claimed authority to raise the dead spiritual and physically. He declared that God the Father had made Him judge of the entire world. And He proved the truth of His claims by pointing to the witness of John the Baptist, the witness of His miraculous works, and to the Scriptures themselves—all bearing testimony to His deity and power.

His opponents still could not receive what He was teaching about Himself. They were examples of what John the apostle said in John 1:11

He came to his own [things], and his own people did not receive him.

What is the problem here? Why won't these religious leaders admit the truth of Jesus' testimony and put their faith in Him as the long-promised Messiah? What is standing in the way?

It's an important question because it gives us insight into why people today reject Jesus despite all the evidence to His identity and power. In our text this morning Jesus identifies the problem. It is deep, at the heart level.

41 I do not receive glory from people. **42** But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. **43** I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. **44** How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? **45** Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. **46** For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. **47** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Haunting question from Jesus in verse 44:
"How can you believe?"

What stands in the way of people like these men putting faith in Christ?

Remember John 5:40

"Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

Why aren't these men willing to come in faith to Christ?

1. Your Love: God or Self (42-43)
2. Your Desire: Glory from God or from man (41, 44)
3. Your Hope: Tradition or Scriptural Truth (45-47)

1. Your Love: God or Self (42-43)

⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

They clearly do not love God, else they would love Jesus. Everything He says and does is perfectly in line with the Father. If you love God, you love those who are like Him. But they hate Jesus. He does not conform to their version of the faith.

Matthew 15:7-9

⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ "This people honors me

with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

They reject Jesus, but they will be glad to receive someone who gets in line with their system.

Some count as many as 64 persons after Jesus claiming to be the Messiah. One of the most famous was one called Simon Bar Kochba, who came on the scene about 60 years after Jesus. Even esteemed rabbis of the time like Rabbi Akiba were convinced Bar Kochba was the Messiah. Rome crushed the Bar Kochba revolt, dashing their hopes to the ground. Jesus predicted in the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24-25) that there would be many such false Messiahs, culminating in the Antichrist.

Human beings often long for a leader to idolize. Anyone but Jesus. Sometimes this desire takes the form of formal religion: the Koran admits that Jesus did miracles and that He did not sin, yet holds that Muhammed, who according to the Koran did no miracles and did sin and died! is somehow greater than Jesus.

In general, people clamor to follow someone they admire. But Jesus as the Bible reveals Him to be is a problem for them. He's too

demanding. He's too disruptive. He calls for repentance and faith. He humbles our pride. He declares Himself Savior and Judge. If you still want to be in charge of your life, of if you're mainly interested in protecting and empowering your own denomination or religion, you don't want Jesus. He won't let you stay as you are. It's that simple.

John 3:19

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Luke 11:42

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Applications

- On whom or what have you set your chief love, and what evidence can others see of that love in your life (time, money, energy, trust, fear)?
- What or whom are you looking to for deliverance and satisfaction? What do you think will set you free?

2. Your Desire: Glory from God or from man (41, 44)

⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people.

44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

In verse 41 Jesus is clarifying that His pushback against the Pharisees' rejection of Him is not because He feels insulted that they aren't glorifying Him. Getting accolades from them is not His purpose or goal. If they think that's what He's trying to do, they are projecting onto Him their own motives for their religious practices.

They are part of the proverbial good-ole-boy club, bolstering one another's egos and seeking glory from the praise of human beings. This is the desire of their hearts. This is what they seek—their goal. As long as it is, they cannot put their trust in Jesus and their Messiah and Savior. Their self-centered pride is exactly opposite from the God-centered humility and repentance required for anyone who is to be forgiven, born again, and welcomed by God through Christ and His perfect merits. As long as you're in it for yourself and the approval and praise from others, your heart is seeking what takes you away from faith in Jesus. You can't seek both. You have to decide.

The world is full of those clamoring for awards and honorary degrees, recognition and affirmation. Some of it is secular. Some of it

is religious. All of it is worthless when it comes to being right with God.

So what is it that you really want? If you want God and His approval, you can have it but only through Christ. If you are in it for yourself and to be well thought of by other humans matters most to you, you'll likely get their praise, but you forego God's. What's most important to you?

Common characteristics of those who defect from the faith: 1) desire to indulge oneself in what God forbids; 2) desire for acceptance and praise from those who reject Jesus—to be considered philosophically and intellectually astute by unbelievers

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:5-6

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:2

But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

According to John 12 after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many people were drawn to Jesus. But the chief priests determined they were going to have to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. The Pharisees were beside themselves because Jesus was gaining a following, thus undermining their own influence.

John 12:19

So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

It was all about receiving glory from men rather than from God. It's the religion of hell.

Applications

- What evidence can you give for whether you care about what God knows you to be versus what other people think you are?
- What are you doing for God versus what you're doing to look good in the sight of others?

3. Your Hope: Tradition or Scriptural Truth (45-47)

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. **46** For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. **47** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

John 9:28-29

28 And they reviled him [the man born blind now healed by Jesus], saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. **29** We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

So how is it that they have set their hope on Moses and would even call themselves disciples of Moses and yet do not believe the writings of Moses?

It is possible to follow in the tradition of a great leader of the past, even one God has used to write inspired Scripture, and yet not really believe what he actually wrote. Many practice a second-hand religion that trades on the high standing of saints of the past but does not adhere to what they taught and believed.

Paul talks about such disciples of Moses in 1 Timothy 1:5-8:

⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. ⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.

The Pharisees and others hijacked the scriptures Moses wrote to develop a system of works righteousness that emphasized external rules, but left the heart untouched, that obsessed over speculations and extrapolations from the law, but ignored weightier matters like the love of God and justice. They missed the point of what Moses' writings teach: that we are a human race created in God's image but fallen from fellowship with God because of our sin; that God has promised a Redeemer who will deliver us from the curse. They were blind to the overarching message of the Mosaic system that underscored our desperate need for an unblemished substitute, a Mediator who would make blood atonement for humanity's failure to keep the law.

Instead they prided themselves in their accomplishments, especially their

separateness from those they considered inferior to themselves before God. Never mind that God promised that ALL the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's offspring, and that the perfect righteousness God puts on our account comes from our faith in His promise, not our perfect performance of the law. Nobody but Jesus ever fulfilled the law, including themselves. So how did they think God would accept them?

They were blind leaders of the blind, washing the outside of the cup and leaving the inside filthy, like whitewashed tombs full of rotting corpses. They decorated the graves of the prophets while continuing in their resistance to the prophetic message. They were all about power and wealth and influence. They foreclosed on widows houses and boiled in rage when an invalid was healed on the Sabbath. They pretended to speak for God, but when God showed up in human flesh, they hated Him enough to desire to murder Him because He disrupted their neat little system that made them important and wealthy.

If you think such religious practitioners have died out, you're not paying attention. This religious charade is responsible for nearly all the damage religion has done to people over history. *Many have turned away from what*

they thought was Christianity, when in reality what they could not stomach was this fraudulent version of it. Such fake religion ought to make you sick—it is blasphemous to the core. It makes merchandise out of God. Don't confuse it with Christ and Christianity.

If you want to find the truth, go back to what the Scriptures actually say. See what Moses actually taught. Don't rely on the knock-off versions of the truth. Don't base your hope on the traditions regarding Scripture. It is appropriate to value what godly people have taught over the years, but don't root your faith in what they said about the truth. Look at what Scripture actually says. That's what reliable. You are accountable for what you do with that whatever traditions and trends swirl around you, vying to steal your loyalty.

Luke 16:27-31

27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— **28** for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'
29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'
30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Moses himself becomes a witness for the prosecution of these men who invoked his name but ignored his writings. He along with the other 40 plus authors of the Scriptures, writing over some 1,500 years from multiple continents but with one great theme of redemption through the promised Messiah Jesus, will stand together in solidarity to condemn those who blew off the Scriptures for their own version of reality, religious or otherwise.

What a treasure we have in the written words of God! There is no substitute. They have the power to make you wise unto salvation:

2 Timothy 3:15

And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Applications

- How much of the religion you practice comes from actual Scripture versus just the culture you're used to?
- Where have you placed your hope of salvation—in your performance or in Christ's?
- If you don't believe what the Scriptures say, what are you trusting in more?

Conclusion

Most of us here see ourselves as believers trusting in Christ Jesus to save us. Don't let loose of your reasons for doing so. Guard your heart. When your heart goes astray, your faith will follow.

Some here do not believe, and you think you're doing the right thing. Just don't flatter yourself about the reason for your unbelief. It is essentially the same as these unbelieving Jewish opponents. It is not for lack of evidence. It is because your heart wants something different, something less than God. You don't love Him or desire His praise. You are in it for yourself and the high opinion of human beings you esteem more than God. But the Scriptures will testify against you in the day of judgment. God has given you all the revelation you need. You just do not want to give up your imagined control of your life and your desire for self-centered goals. In the final day, you will realize that you've played the fool, trading what was eternal for what is passing like a shadow.

The Heart of Unbelief

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2. Your Desire: Glory from God or from man (41, 44)
3. Your Hope: Tradition or Scriptural Truth (45-47)

Closing Song: How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

Applications Summary

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- What or whom are you looking to for deliverance and satisfaction? What do you think will set you free?
- What evidence can you give for whether you care about what God knows you to be versus what other people think you are?
- What are you doing for God versus what you're doing to look good in the sight of others?
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Additional question

- Since God looks on the heart, what are some ways you have found to nurture your heart in true faith and godliness?