

April 7, 2013

Has Jesus Accepted *You* Into *His* Heart?

John 2:23-25

BI: Not all faith in Jesus is true saving faith. None are true disciples of Christ but those whom He approves.

This week as I was studying and praying about this message, asking for wisdom and that God would bless us and change us by it, it occurred to me once again what a privilege it is to have the joy week after week of studying God's word. Every time I come to the text of Scripture I find pure gold. God always reveals to me things I didn't expect to find; treasure enough to make us all rich in the knowledge of God. The older I get, the more I love the Bible. The more I experience life and interact with the difficulties of the people we serve the more convinced I become that God's word is more than sufficient for every need. What a joy it is to belong to so gracious a God as this, amen?

One of the practical issues that regularly arises in church ministry is the lack of assurance of salvation. Hardly a month goes by that someone does not come to me or Brent or one of our counselors asking questions that have to do with the assurance of salvation. And one of the things I have observed over the years is that some people who lack assurance should really have strong confidence that they are children of God. On the other hand, some who have great confidence that they are true disciples of Christ should really question whether they know Christ at all.

The title of my message this morning is "*Has Jesus accepted You into His heart?*" You can probably tell that I intended for that to be a little provocative. But I think as we look at the text this morning we're going to see that this question is pretty close to the question the Apostle John wants us to ask.

Let's look at the text together. Read John 2:23-25

Now, you don't have to be an expert in exegesis to derive from this text that Jesus was not terribly impressed with the faith of the people who were saying that they believed in Him. Does that shock you? Does it bother you that perhaps Jesus doesn't accept the faith of some who claim to believe in Him? Does it sound judgmental? Perhaps it seems almost arrogant, exclusive or unloving? Well, a cursory reading of this passage seems to suggest that's what John is saying. He appears to be suggesting that salvation is not simply about us accepting Jesus but also whether or not Jesus accepts us. Let's spend a few minutes digging into this text together to see if we can figure this out.

If you're taking notes this morning, my outline is going to be a little different because I want to offer each point in the form of a question.

I. Did the People Believe in Jesus?:

1. Let's remember the context here. Jesus had just come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast and cleansed the Temple. When He saw the market that had been set up in the Temple Courts He made a whip of cords and chased everyone out. The result was that his disciples believed all the more that He was Messiah, and the Jewish leaders responded with angry unbelief. John now turns our attention to a third group of people who either witnessed or heard about what Jesus had done. More than that, they had also seen some of the miracles that Jesus performed in and around Jerusalem which John tells us nothing about. In any case, John explains that "many believed in His

Jerusalem which John tells us nothing about. In any case, John explains that "many believed in His name" because of the miraculous signs he was performing.

2. The question is, did the people believe in Jesus? Clearly the answer is yes. In fact John very decisively states that they "believed in His name." Now what would you think of a person who professed that they believed in His name? That's more than simply saying "I believe in Jesus." To say "I believe in His name" almost sounds like there is some depth to their profession; that there is some level of theological understanding behind that statement, doesn't it?

3. In fact, if we're good students of the Gospel of John we might even remember that in chapter 1 John explains that those to whom Jesus came rejected Him, but (12) "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Wow! That really makes it sound like the people in chapter two got the real thing, doesn't it?

4. They had heard about what Jesus did in the temple. They probably heard about Him turning water into wine. Many of them actually saw Him perform other miracles there in Jerusalem which the synoptic gospel writers describe (but John leaves out). They looked at all the evidence and professed, "We believe!"

5. That sounds good, doesn't it? Aren't these the kind of people you would want to move in next door? Aren't these the kind of folks we want in our church? It sure looks that way. But what John wants us to see is that looks can be deceiving. Remember what the Lord said to the prophet Samuel when he was trying to choose the first king of Israel? He said, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Prepare yourself for this sobering thought: Not all faith in Jesus is what it appears to be.

6. Did the people believe in Jesus? Yes. But here is the second question:

II. Did Jesus Accept Their Faith?:

1. Read v. 24

2. The word "but" here is an adversative. John's goal is to establish the stark contrast between the profession of the people and Jesus' x-ray examination of their hearts. And by doing so he teaches us that though a person's profession of faith is important, the question of a person's salvation doesn't stop there. Our faith in Christ is not of a genuine and saving quality just because we feel like it is; just because it has a quality of sincerity and commitment behind it. The most important question is not "What do I think about my faith in Jesus?" but what does Jesus think about my faith in Jesus?

3. This is not quite as obvious in the English text as it is in the Greek. But in the original language there is a play on words here that is unmistakable. Notice in verse 23 John tells us that many "believed." Then notice that in verse 24 John says Jesus was not "entrusting." What we don't see in the English is that the word "believed" and the word "entrust" are built on the same root word, "pistos" which means to "believe" or to "trust."

4. What John is telling us is that while in some sense the people believed in Jesus, "Jesus did not believe in them. He had no faith in their faith" (John MacArthur, Gospel of John, p. 95).

Greek Scholar Robertson Nicoll logically concludes then that "It is necessary to consider not only whether we have faith in Christ but whether Christ has faith in us" (711).

5. This puts a different complexion of the issue of saving faith, doesn't it? In our day evangelicals are almost glib about calling people to "trust in Jesus," or "believe in Jesus" or "accept Jesus into your heart." But we need to be very careful with this because if we are NOT careful, we may convince people to pray a prayer, sign a sticker in the back of their Bible that indicates the date they "placed their faith in Jesus" and inadvertently give them a false assurance of their salvation when in fact they never even understood the gospel to begin with.

6. When we read this passage we have to ask, "What was wrong with the people's faith? Why would Jesus NOT accept it? The text clearly says that the people believed in Jesus name. That sounds like genuine faith, doesn't it? And John doesn't accuse them of having no faith at all. They really did believe something about Jesus. In some way they were even happy to align themselves

really did believe something about Jesus. In some way they were even happy to align themselves with Jesus even against the sentiments of the Jewish leaders. Nevertheless, it seems that however heart-felt their faith may have been, it was nevertheless rejected by Christ. How can that be explained?

7. Well, it can be explained by the fact that their faith was rooted in the miracles Jesus performed rather than in the gospel that He offered. It seems their faith was in the fact that Jesus was a true worker of miracles. Perhaps they even believed that He was the Messiah (we know many of them did). The Pharisees would say that Jesus did His miracles by the power of Satan. But these people didn't believe that. They believed the power of His miracles was from God. Nevertheless, their faith never ran any deeper than this.

8. There is a kind of faith that resides in the understanding only. It is a faith that gladly assents to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah; that He is the Son of God; and even that He is God. But many times that faith is focused exclusively on what Jesus can do for them. Its focused on what they can get out of Him. But they never really consider the fact that Jesus came to be their Lord, their master, and the Provider of a once-for-all, perfect sacrifice for their sins.

9. We know that this was the kind of faith many people in Israel had because of how they responded when Jesus did things that they didn't like. Turn with me to John 6:60 & 66

10. But this should not surprise us. Jesus made it very clear that this kind of thing would take place in His parable of the soils. Turn with me to Luke 8:11-15

11. The point is, beloved, that no everyone who says they believe in Jesus actually have a faith that is acceptable to Jesus. Turn with me to Matt. 7:21-23.

Also Luke 6&8

12. You see, although many claimed to believe, Jesus knew that mere intellectual assent proves nothing; James 2:9 reveals that even the demons have that kind of faith.

13. As J.D. Greear explains, "Salvation is not a prayer that you pray in a one-time ceremony and then move on from. [Rather] salvation is a posture of repentance and faith that you begin in a moment and maintain for the rest of your life" (*Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart: How to know for sure you are saved*, p. 5).

14. The faith that Jesus accepts is a faith of one who relishes the fact that they are a slave of Christ, and that Christ is their Lord. It's a faith that clings to the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross as his only hope. And because it is a faith that rests not in *what Jesus can do* for them but on *who Jesus is* for them, it is a faith that Jesus accepts. This is why Jesus say in John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

III. Conclusion:

You see, beloved, some people question their salvation because when they look back to the moment they trusted Christ they ask themselves the wrong questions. They ask, "Was I sincere enough? Did I believe enough? Did I confess enough? But salvation is not given because you prayed a prayer correctly, or uttered up enough sincerity, but because you have leaned all the hopes of your soul upon the Person and work of Christ. If that is the posture of your life before God today, then you should have great confidence that you are a child of God and that the Lord Jesus accepts your faith. And that is true even though you still struggle with temptation and sin.

On the other hand there are people who don't ever question their salvation who really need to. If your hope is based on the fact that you believe Jesus is the Son of God and you prayed a prayer to tell Him so, but you are NOT living in a posture of repentance and faith; if you tolerate unrepentant sin in your life and hardly ever wonder if God cares about any of that, then I must warn you: Beware. The Lord Jesus knows the true condition of your heart. And though you may believe in Him, He may not believe in you. Your's is likely a faith that He will not accept.

If you think you may be in the latter category, I plead with you to turn from your selfish and shallow faith and turn to Christ in repentance and faith. Lay your heart bear before Him. Confess

the depths of your sin and your need for what He accomplished for you on the cross. Turn over the reigns of your life to Him and joyfully submit to Him as the Lord of your life until He comes or calls you home. This is the kind of faith that Jesus accepts.

BI: Not all faith in Jesus is true saving faith. None are true disciples of Christ but those whom He approves.

Key Scriptures:

This was Jesus' first public act

There had to be more going on here than just a man with a whip. God must have been putting a spirit of fear in the people to cause them to clear out of the temple because of one man.

The Jews expected the Messiah to chase the Romans out. But here Jesus is chasing the Jews out of their own temple. God cares more about the holiness of His own people than he does the sin of the world.

Judgment begins in the house of the Lord

Exegetical Outline

John 1:1-5
