

Why it's Hard to Trust in Jesus

Part 2

John 7:14-24

BI: The gospel calls sinners to lay down our self-righteousness in favor of the righteousness of God that comes by faith in Christ.

Read John 7:14-14

Introduction:

Last time we were in the gospel of John we talked about why it's difficult for lost people to believe in Jesus. This is what we see here in the text of John 7. Jesus is offering Himself to the people and they are really finding it difficult to place their complete faith in Him. Why? First, as we saw last time, people find it hard to place their faith in Jesus because...

I. They Reject the Source of His Teaching: (14-16)

1. Read 14-16
2. The Jews found it impossible to believe that Jesus received His teaching from God. Granted, they had never heard ANYBODY teach like He taught. You may remember back in Matthew's gospel where after hearing Jesus teach "the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Mat 7:28-29).
3. To their question, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" Jesus simply responds, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me." I teach only what God the Father has revealed to me. And Jesus said this kind of thing repeatedly in the gospels.
4. This has always been a stumbling block for people. The idea that the Bible is THE Word of God is just as offensive to the post-modern mind as it was for the Jewish leaders who heard the words come strait out of Jesus' mouth.
5. Second, it's difficult for sinners to believe in Jesus...

II. Because they have no Desire to Obey God: (17)

1. Read v. 17
2. You see, sinners don't want to be under God's authority. They're not willing to do His will so they don't have the capacity to know when a particular truth claim is from God.

3. One of the marks of a true child of God is that he recognizes when God is speaking and has a desire to obey what God says. They “will to do His will.” Not true of an unbeliever. They are committed to their own agenda.

4. So it’s difficult for sinners to believe in Jesus because they don’t accept that His word is from God, and they have no desire to obey God. Third, It’s difficult for sinners to believe in Jesus...

III. Because they Seek their Own Glory Rather than Gods: (18)

1. Read 7:18

2. Sinful human beings are hard-wired to make much of themselves. Moreover, we all desire for others to make much of us. Everyone wants to be admired by others. That probably accounts for why so many people write online blogs, why shows like “American Idol” are so popular, and why Facebook is so successful. They all play off man’s desire to have a following; to be admired, and maybe even famous. It’s hard to consider glorifying someone else when we’re so committed to exalting self.

3. The call to Jesus Christ is a Jesus is a call to set aside one’s own desire for self-exaltation, and self-aggrandizement. It’s a call to die to self and life for Christ. Paul expressed this attitude when He said, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

4. This kind of humility is not natural. It is a fruit of the Spirit in the life of a sinner whose heart has been radically altered (healed) by a miraculous, saving miracle of grace. Unregenerate sinners find it hard to believe in Jesus because Jesus demands that we forget self and make our lives all about exalting and glorifying Him.

5. But there is another reason why it’s hard to believe in Jesus. Sinners find it hard to believe in Jesus...

IV. Because they Hate having Their Self-righteousness exposed.

1. Read 7:19-24

2. Jesus had received his teaching (His gospel) from God and had carried out God’s will perfectly. He was the Righteous One, the only truly righteous man. Yet, the Jews were accusing Him of unrighteousness.

3. The problem with those who wanted to kill Jesus is that they had a wrong view of righteousness. In their minds one becomes righteous by law-keeping. To their way of thinking Jesus was a law-breaker because He healed that man (Chap. 5) at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. Problem was, the Mosaic law forbade people from “working” on the Sabbath.

4. In reality, however, that not even the Pharisees obeyed the Sabbath in the strict sense that they demanded others to keep it. In verse 23 Jesus points out that they regularly circumcise men (and baby boys) on the Sabbath, and isn't that "work"? What requires more work, the delicate surgery that circumcision requires, or Jesus saying to a man, "Get up, pick up your bed and walk."

5. Of course, they would retort that it was not Jesus speaking to the man that was the problem but his telling the man to pick up His bed and walk on the Sabbath. That was a problem, because the Rabbinic traditions said that one thing you are not allowed to do on the Sabbath is pick up your bed and carry it. So when they saw the man who had been a paralytic for 38 years carrying his bed, they didn't care that a miracle had taken place. It didn't occur to them that Jesus must be a prophet or the Messiah. All they cared about was that a rule had been broken! And now in chapter 7, Jesus is dealing with the same issue: a wrong view of righteousness.

6. By the way, this is a frequent theme in the gospels. Jesus frequently has to deal with a wrong view of righteousness and it usually revolved around the Sabbath. But the problem was that the Pharisees and scribes misunderstood what the Sabbath was about. As MacArthur explains:

The essence of Sabbath observance was holiness, not resting or refraining from work. It was a provision meant to remove the heart from earthly endeavors and to turn it toward God¹.

7. Jesus makes this explicit when (Matt. 23) He strongly condemns the religious leaders of His day saying:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.²⁴ "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"²

8. You see, God's highest ethic is not "rule keeping" but loving one's neighbor and exercising compassion and mercy and faithfulness toward them. This is exactly what Jesus did for the paralytic. He loved this man and showed him mercy on the Sabbath, and it pleased God.

9. Elsewhere Jesus points out that there are clear OT examples of how people actually pleased the Lord by NOT keeping the law. Turn with me to Matt. 12. Here Jesus teaches that there is something greater than the ceremonial law; namely, the law of compassion and mercy toward our fellow man. In Matt. 12:3- He said:

Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,⁴ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated

¹ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series*, (1985) Moody Press, (256).

² Matt. 23:23-24 *NASB*.

bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? ⁵ “Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶ “But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ “But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.³

10. What was Jesus doing? He was exposing their deep self-righteousness. It’s easier to keep rules than it is to love people. That takes thought, self-sacrifice, humility, mercy and love – the very things the Jewish leaders lacked and the very things that were most precious to God. Jesus was exposing them for the frauds they were, and that didn’t make it any easier for them to believe in Him. If anything, it made them want to kill Him all the more.

11. But before we come down too hard on the Pharisees, let’s acknowledge that we too struggle with self-righteousness. And there are essentially two ways to do this. On the one hand, I might ask you how you feel about your relationship to God today and you might say, “Great!” And if I pressed you to explain why you feel so good about your relationship with the Lord you might say, “I guess it’s because I had such a good week. I mean, some days I really struggle to get up on time. I skip my Bible and Prayer time and then I just seem to feel like a loser all day long. But this week, I got into the word and prayer every day. In fact, I led family worship every night and even managed to get to church on time. So yes, I feel pretty good about my relationship with the Lord!

12. You know what? There is a name for that kind of thinking. Its called “Self-righteousness.” Why? Well because you evaluated your relationship with God based on what you did rather than on what Christ accomplished for you on the cross to justify you and reconcile you to God.

13. But there is another way to exercise self-righteousness. I might ask you how you feel about your relationship to God today and you might say, “Horrible.” And if I pressed you about why you felt so bad about your relationship with the Lord you might say, “Because I’m such a lazy, slack-hearted, undisciplined slob of a sinner. I didn’t spend any time in the word this week, my prayer time consisted of telling the Lord repeatedly that I’m sorry for failing Him again, I didn’t get the house cleaned like I should and I was tempted to skip church altogether. So frankly, my relationship with the Lord this week stinks.”

14. You know what? There is a name for that kind of thinking. It’s called, “Self-righteousness. Why? Because you evaluated your relationship with God based on what you failed to do rather than on what Christ accomplished for you on the cross.

15. Now don’t misunderstand. God wants you to discipline yourself for the purpose of Godliness, and you ought to pursue fellowship with Christ every day. But these are not the basis of our relationship with God. As Jerry Bridges explains, “God never intended that we relate to Him directly. Our own performance is never good enough to be

³ Matthew 12:3-7 *NASB*

acceptable to Him. The only way we can relate to God is through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.”⁴ The reality is, “You worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need for God’s grace”⁵

16. You see, there is a righteousness that we desperately need, don’t have, and can’t earn. God requires it of us but we cannot manufacture it on our own. We must turn to Christ for righteousness. The self-righteousness of law keeping can neither establish nor maintain your relationship with God. Our standing before God is grounded in our union with Christ who shed His blood for our sins and applied His own righteousness to our account.

17. But believing this requires humility. It requires that we give up any hope of satisfying God’s righteous requirements by our good works and law keeping. It requires that we cast ourselves completely on the grace of God and place our faith in the merits of Jesus Christ rather than our own.

18. This is what the Lord’s Supper is about, isn’t it? It is a picture of what Christ did on our behalf to reconcile us to God.

Lord’s Supper: (led by Frank Shannon)

⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, (1994) Navpress (22).

⁵ Ibid, (18)