

GOSPEL OF JOHN
THE HARDENING OF UNBELIEF
JOHN 12:37-43

Introduction

In our text today, we find ourselves asking, what more could **JESUS** have done to convince these people that **HE** was indeed **WHO HE** claimed to be? Why were so many still refusing to believe **HIM**?

I. UNDERSTAND THAT TO A NATION THAT SOUGHT FOR A SIGN, JESUS GAVE THEM MORE THAN ENOUGH SIGNS TO BELIEVE HIM! (John 12:37)

In the first half of his **GOSPEL**, **JOHN** highlighted **seven miraculous signs** that **JESUS** did during **HIS** earthly ministry:

- He turned water into wine! (John 2:1–12)
- He healed a nobleman’s son from a distance! (John 4:46–54)
- He healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda! (John 5:1–17)
- He fed 5,000 men plus an unknown number of women and children with a young boy’s lunch! (John 6:1–14)
- He walked on water and stilled a storm! (John 6:15–21)
- He healed a man who was blind from birth! (John 9:1–41)
- He raised Lazarus from the dead! (John 11:17–45)

JESUS did way more miracles than what **JOHN** gives us details of and we will see that he tells us that when we get to the end of his **GOSPEL**, but he records seven and seven is the number of completion!

But after JESUS had done “so many miracles before them”, what more did any person need in order to be convinced that JESUS was and is worthy to be believed on and trusted?

We can almost sense the **APOSTLE JOHN** writing this with a sadness in his heart as he pens this verse.

The implication is obvious. **The problem was not with JESUS CHRIST or with what HE did or did not do. The problem was with the people and their willful hearts of unbelief! They willed not to believe! They refused to believe!**

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II. UNDERSTAND THAT HAVING A STUBBORN, WILLFUL HEART OF UNBELIEF IS DANGEROUS! (John 12:38-41)
It was dangerous then and it is still dangerous today!

There are **consequences** when we are given **TRUTH** and we **willfully** and **consistently** brush it off.

Have you ever had some **window of opportunity** come your way that you said “**no**” to and then later you regretted saying “**no**” when you realized that you missed out big time by not saying “**yes**” when you had the chance?

We need to make the most of our SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES that the LORD allows to come our way as well! Because even SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES don’t always repeat themselves!

Proverbs 27:1–“Boast not thyself of to morrow; For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

James 4:14–“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

To turn down TRUTH today may actually be an ETERNAL REJECTION simply because there is no guarantee that TRUTH will come your way again!

That is why the Scriptures say that **TODAY** is the day of salvation?

2 Corinthians 6:2–“(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Today is the day of salvation because we have no guarantee of tomorrow!

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To willfully brush off truth is like disregarding warnings. We have no guarantee that we will be given an additional warning after the first one before we face the consequences for ignoring it.

Yet, how often do we say to ourselves, *“I’ll get right with God tomorrow or after I get through this period of time or this series of events.”*

Each time we willfully ignore a SCRIPTURAL TRUTH, that action becomes more ingrained in our souls, like the formation of a habit!

Sometimes without realizing it, we become calloused or hardened in our hearts toward the work that GOD wants to do in our lives! We can get to where we have trouble hearing the **LORD** anymore, all because when we did hear **HIM** we said **“NO!”** one too many times!

So, why do so many resist **GOD’S** direction in their lives? Why do they find so many reasons to **not** do what the **LORD** says?

The basis of unbelief is our own sin nature! Though **JOHN** does not address this fact in these verses, it certainly is a primary factor. We are rebellious by nature!

When we came into this world we came needing **GOD** to intervene and initiate within us the faith that would enable us to trust **HIM**.

GOD’S heart for **ISRAEL** was for them to **BELIEVE HIM!**
GOD’S heart for **US** is for **US** to **BELIEVE HIM!**

JOHN wrote this **GOSPEL**, with the inspiration of **GOD HIMSELF**, so that we would **BELIEVE**.

John 20:31—“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

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That was not just **JOHN’S** desire! That is **GOD’S** desire!

Even when **HE** allows us to become calloused in our disobedience to **HIM**, even when **HE** takes it on **HIMSELF** to harden our hearts, **HE** does so with the desire that we will come to our senses, repent, and walk with **HIM** in obedience.

GOD does not prevent people from being converted. In **HIS** judgment, as a result of man’s unbelief, **GOD** sometimes hardens the heart further with **HIS TRUTH!**
(e.g. In Exodus, Pharaoh hardened his own heart against the LORD before the LORD ever hardened it more!)

As we read these verses, keep in mind that **GOD’S** actions do not excuse our own sinful behavior! **GOD** gives us an out through repentance if we choose to surrender ourselves to **HIM!**

Notice, JOHN is quoting **ISAIAH** from two different passages. First, from *Isaiah 53:1*. Then, beginning with **verse 40**, he is paraphrasing *Isaiah 6:10*.

Isaiah 53:1 is the opening verse to the chapter that describes our **LORD JESUS** as the **SUFFERING SERVANT WHO** would take our sins upon **HIMSELF** so that we would not have to bear the penalty ourselves!

Isaiah 53:2-6

This is a very fitting chapter from Isaiah from which to draw a quote as **JESUS** was preparing to go into **JERUSALEM** to be the **PASSOVER LAMB**. But, **JOHN** uses *verse 1* to raise the question about why were the miraculous signs not enough for the people to believe in **JESUS?**

JOHN then turns to *Isaiah 6:10* to give the answer.

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How did the **LORD** harden the hearts of **HIS PEOPLE, ISRAEL**? **HE** used what caused them to harden their own hearts—**HIS TRUTH! ISAIAH’S** pronouncements were said in the context of **ISRAEL’S** consistent and persistent disobedience!

Verse 41 of our text says, “*These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*” (Likely referring to vs 1-3 here in Isaiah 6.)

Cf. Isaiah 6:1-3

After seeing the **LORD** in **HIS** glory, **ISAIAH** heard the voice of **LORD** in *Verse 8!*

The **LORD** then gave **ISAIAH** the words to speak to the people. (*Vs 9-10*)

Even so, the overriding desire of the **LORD** is that even those with calloused hearts and those who are dull of hearing and blind would eventually see, hear, understand, turn and be healed.

These actions of **GOD** to harden hearts, dull ears and close eyes may very well be means of helping these people come to the end of their ropes, face the consequences of their sinfulness, and turn in repentance to the **ONE WHO** can truly save them.

III. UNDERSTAND THE HARD WORDS REGARDING SECRET BELIEVERS! (Vs 42-43)

A. There Is A Strong, Positive Statement About Some Of The Pharisees Who Believed! (Vs 42a)

The **SCRIPTURE** does not give us a specific number here who believed on **JESUS** but rather tells us that there were “*many*” of the “*CHIEF RULERS*” (*i.e. The Council*) who did.

We might find that surprising given what we have seen and heard from the **PHARISEES**.

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B. There Is Also A Stingingly Hard Statement About These Secret Believers Among The Pharisees! (Vs 42b-43)

1. The hard statement comes because of the **secrecy** of their belief! *Vs 42b “...they did not confess him...”*
2. The hard statement comes because of the **reason for the secrecy** of their belief! *Vs 42b “...lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”*

Earlier in this **BOOK** we saw **NICODEMUS** came to **JESUS** by night and made a confession to **HIM!**
John 3:2—“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

But we do not see an **open confession** to others!

In *John 7:45-52* is the only time we see this **PHARISEE** take up for **JESUS**. It wasn’t confession, but he did take up for **JESUS!**

Later in this **BOOK** when we get to *John 19:38-40*, we will see **JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA** along with **NICODEMUS** take the body of **JESUS** from the **CROSS** and prepare **HIM** for burial and then bury **HIM** in **JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA’S** tomb:

John 19:38 says, “*Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,*” and that passage again refers to **NICODEMUS** having come to **JESUS** by night.

We might give these believers the benefit of the doubt. We might even characterize them as young believers in the process of growing up in the faith. But all we know is they appeared to be **secret believers** in **CHRIST!**

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Perhaps their burial of **JESUS** was their stepping forward and ceasing to being secret disciples.

The APOSTLE PAUL, once an unbelieving **PHARISEE** himself when he was known as **SAUL**, gave us the word of faith which he preached in:
Romans 10:9-10- 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Such a formula challenges any theory that suggests we can remain silent about our association with **CHRIST** and remain in good standing with **HIM**.

Too many of us are just plain old wimps when it comes to identifying ourselves with **JESUS CHRIST**.

Is it that we love the praise of men more than the praise of **GOD** and allow that to shape and form us?

I'm not talking about those in other places of the world where to publicly confess **CHRIST** might not just cost them their job, but their very lives!

For them, I am willing to give them some slack. It also appears that **GOD** does, as well.

In those cases, it's doubtful that the driving force for keeping their faith secret is a love for the praise of men. Rather, it is a means of providing food and shelter for a believing man's family and being able to be around for them!

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But, that is not our situation. At least not yet!

We really don't have much of an excuse to be a secret believer. Yet, the pressure is on for us to stay silent and unknown to those around us now more than ever before.

Conclusion

So, in closing, let's ask where are we on the spectrum of belief?

Are you unconvinced that **JESUS** has any right to exercise authority in your life? If so, you are in a dangerous position! You are one heartbeat from hell and spending an eternity apart from **GOD** in the **LAKE OF FIRE!**

What you need to know is that today is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time for you to come to CHRIST! Today is all you have! The longer you resist the **LORD** in your life, the more **calloused** and **hardened** you will become!

None in this room needs to be among those who would not believe. Not when you can freely place your faith in **CHRIST** today, right now, and enter into the fullness of life in **CHRIST**, both now and for all eternity.

Now, for those who are in the **SECRET SERVICE** as Believers. Understand that you are doing great harm to those without **CHRIST** by your failure to speak up for the **LORD** and what **HE** has done for this lost and dying world!

Our remaining silent about our faith in **CHRIST** may impede someone from being able to spend eternity in heaven?

Carl F.H. Henry once said, "*The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.*".