

**The Peril of Shallow Faith**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 2:23-25**  
**April 10, 2011**

Turn with me in your Bibles to John 2. Our text this morning is Verses 23-25, the last three verses of the 2nd chapter. We're going to see in this passage something that is absolutely stunning about the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us, as we read it, to feel the force of the words because it really is something that is incredibly surprising, especially in light of the way evangelicalism has in general watered down the understanding of what Christianity really is, what saving faith really is. We have lived in the last really couple of hundred years in an increasing, or diminishing understanding of what true saving faith is. Since the second great awakening, not uniformly, but there has been a growing plague upon the Church, and the plague is *'easy believe-ism'*. The idea of kind of a minimalistic approach that one need only believe the bare essentials about Jesus Christ, and the Gospel, and one is saved.

Sometimes we hear it as the idea that though this doctrine is technically true, it has been misused. Southern Baptist churches have spoken of *'once saved, always saved'*, and the Bible teaches that once you are truly saved, let me be clear on that, once you are truly saved, you are always going to be saved. But that doctrine has been misunderstood to mean once you've had an experience with God, once you've had an emotional encounter, once you've made a decision, once you've gone to the front of the church, once you've been baptized you are always saved. That is not what the Bible teaches, and we're going to see this passage clearly presents that reality, that there is a type of faith that is not true faith at all, and it is not an uncommon thing for people to have shallow faith, that unsaving faith. So the title of the message this morning is *'The Peril of Shallow Faith'*.

The question before us is: What constitutes true faith? What constitutes saving faith? That is the subject of the passage before us here at the end of the 2nd chapter. Look with me at John 2:23.

***John 2:23-25 ~ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.***



Let's pray together.

*Our Father, as we come before Your word, we are aware as we always need be of our inadequacy, of our inability to understand, to believe, to obey. So we ask that Your Holy Spirit might grant us, that in Your light we might see light. That we might be changed by the power of our Savior, by the power of His truth. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

Now I want us to just look at the passage, just spend the first part of the message looking at the passage, and feeling the force of just the unfolding of this account, this three-verse account. Then I want us to look at I think the two points we're going to have in the sermon, after kind of an extended introduction. We are going to see that there are two points that we need to understand, that the peril of shallow faith is avoided by having a right view of self, and a right view of Christ. But I want us to get there by first of all, observing carefully the text and feeling the force and surprise. Imagine you are reading these words for the first time. We've just read about, in the previous section, how Jesus cleansed the temple. How He declared that His body was the true temple. We saw that the Jews were not believing Him. They ask in Verse 18, "What sign do you show us?" Then Verse 23, John begins to tell us the rest of what happened during this first Jerusalem visit as Messiah, the first Jerusalem visit after His baptism.

He says in Verse 23, when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name. Many believed literally into His name. This is wonderful, isn't it? This sounds fantastic, the Gospel is having great success. After an initial difficulty with the Jews in the temple who were unbelieving, we saw in the previous passage, it seems that there is a number of people who are coming to faith. The Bible says, "They believed into His name." We could say people are being saved in large numbers it appears. They believed in His name observing His signs which He was doing. The New American Standard translates that word 'observing'. The other major translation the King James, and the NIV, and ESV say 'saw' His signs. I think 'observe' is a much better translation of the Greek word here 'theōreō', which means 'to gaze at, to look at with intensity, and interest, and purpose, to carefully observe the details'. A more literal translation even in observing might be 'beholding, looking at with a sense of wonder and interest, attention fully engaged' is the idea. "Many were believing into His name as they were observing, beholding the signs He was doing."

The signs He was doing, that is a key word in the Book of John. The word '*signs*' occurs 17 times in John's Gospel and it is tied with the main purpose of the book. We see that in John 20:30-31 where we read that John reports that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, "but these are written that you may have life, that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that you may have life in His name." He says, "The way I've structured my Gospel," John says, "is to show you signs that Jesus did. I want you to observe." He is talking to his readers of the book, "I want you to observe the signs that Jesus did carefully, and as you observe them, you are going to be able to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

So signs are very important. John knows that right up front. What is the sign? The sign is a wonder, or a miracle that inspires awe, that has a spiritual purpose, a spiritual end. So that the word '*sign*' really means '*authenticating miracle, that which is a proof of a person's calling or authority*'. So these people were observing His signs, His miracles. They were gazing at them, looking at them with purpose and understanding something of the purpose of His miracles. Many of the signs He was doing so that they believed into His name. There is a sense in which this seems to be saying they believed into something of His character, and His mission even. It seems that they understood that Jesus was Messiah. Many of them were understanding something of that. They saw the signs, considered them, and believed into His name. If the account ended at Verse 23 we would just be thinking, "Wow, there is some really good ministry going on in Jerusalem." A number of people have gotten saved in Jesus' first time in Jerusalem since His ministry has begun.

But then we have those two verses at the end of the chapter which are absolutely stunning, and which bring about a reversal of our understanding completely. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them. Jesus was not giving Himself to them. In fact, this surprising turn of events is even heightened by a wordplay that is going on that is not really as evident in the English as it could be. The word '*believed*', they believed on Him, into His name, they believed in His name, Verse 23. The word '*believed*' is the same as the word '*entrusting*'. The Bible says many believed in His name, but Jesus was not believing in them. It would be a better way to say it was '*many*' in English. That captures the meaning here of what '*believe*' and '*trust*' are related to. "Many trusted in His name, but He was not entrusting Himself to them." "They were believing into Him, but He was not believing in them."

He knew something about them that would not allow Him to give Himself to them. He recognized their inadequate faith. That is the point. They had a kind of faith but it was not genuine saving faith. It was a starting place perhaps, but it was not salvation because the essence of salvation is to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. You don't just believe facts and make a decision that you accept it, you believe the Bible says that when you become a Christian you are *in* Christ, you are *joined* to Jesus Christ, and all that He is becomes yours as you look to Him in faith. Here Jesus is holding Himself back from them. Why? As you read the passage that is the kind of question that we ought to be asking as we read this and imagine again, reading it for the first time, it looks like this is a tremendous time of people getting saved. If you read Verse 23, but Jesus on His part, Verse 24, was not entrusting Himself to them. We ought to be asking, "Why? Lord, why? Why would You not be entrusting Yourself to them, to those who believed into Your name?"

He gives the reason, three times He says the same reason. One reason three times. Twice positively, and once negatively. Look at the end of Verse 24, it's the first time, *...for He knew all men...* Now the second reason, *...and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man...* He has no need to know outside testimony concerning man. And the third reason, *...for He Himself knew what was in man.* Do you see that? Three times He says, the reason Jesus wasn't entrusting Himself to them was because He knew their hearts. He knew their hearts! Though it's a three-verse passage, I think John, in the way he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, puts the words together, they believe Jesus, Jesus did not believe or give Himself to them. That wordplay makes it emphatic. Do you see this? That they are believing, but they are not truly believing. He is not believing in their faith. Then, why? The three-fold reason.

Remember when you are reading the Bible and it says anything three times, that is of the superlative order, the highest order, the highest level of emphasis. What did the angels say when they saw the Lord, or when Isaiah sees the Lord? What are the angels always saying, the seraphim around the throne, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." That is a three-fold statement picturing the highest degree of importance. So this is saying, Jesus, though they were believing, He was not believing in them. He was not giving Himself to them for He knew what was in their hearts. The question is: What did He know?

The Bible presents to us often things that at first glance perplex us, and even can seem contradictory. In fact, in this passage you have the statement, "Many believed into His name," Chapter 2, Verse 23. Turn over to Chapter 1 and Verse 12. After he said in Verse 11:

***John 1:11-12 ~ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,***

The phrase, *...even to those who believe in His name*, is exactly the same grammatically as the phrase in Chapter 2, Verse 23. Those people in Chapter 1, Verse 12, who believe in His name, He gives the right, the authority to become the children of God. He gives a relationship. He gives Himself. But in Chapter 2, Verse 23, those who believe into His name He holds back. What is that saying? Apparently that is saying there is a kind of belief to which Jesus responds to, and there is a kind of belief to which He does not give Himself. There are two types of believing. This in and of itself ought to call into question that whole ‘*easy believe-ism*’ mentality, that minimalistic, reductionistic, all you have to do is just assent to these things because that is really the way it has degenerated into the last 50 years or so. That if you believe in Christ, and you make a profession of faith, that no matter, even afterwards, you decide that you are not a Christian, you don’t want to be a Christian, there are many churches and many people who will say, “No, you are saved because you made a decision.” That is not at all biblical. The Bible teaches that a true decision will manifest itself. Remember the parable of the sower? It will manifest itself in fruitfulness, the fruits of the Spirit, an increasing life of holiness. Yes, always a battle with sin. Yes, always difficulty, three steps forward, two steps back, but there is progress. That is the ground of true biblical assurance.

In a passage like this, rightly understood, clearly shows the wrongheadedness of ‘*easy believe-ism*’. It is not just a matter of intellectual assent or an experience. The question is: What is genuine faith? Because there were many who had this kind of shallow faith. The text said, “Many believed in His name.” Many had an understanding of some level of who Jesus was, but not apparently deep enough. What is it that Jesus recognized in them, or what was the problem? The problem is, as we look at the rest of the Gospel of John, it helps us to understand this. They were coming to Jesus with a mindset that recognized Him as Messiah on their own terms. They believed into His name in a sense, they believed He was sent from God, they believed that He was the anointed of God, possibly even *the* true Messiah that was to come. They understood Messiah in terms of their own needs, their own desires. They had a very shallow view of salvation, a very shallow view of their need. They were concerned with political injustice. It is a great Messianic expectancy that was filling Israel when Jesus was there. The nature of the Roman rule over Israel had created large parties of zealots, people who wanted to see Israel come back to its own nation, the glory that they had had under David and

Solomon. So there was this Messianic expectation and they hated the fact they were being ruled over by the pagan Romans who were idolaters, wicked, evil people, much more evil, the Jews thought, than themselves.

So when they saw someone who was performing signs, demonstrating the power of God, they immediately interpreted that in terms of their own wants and desires. “Yes, we see that He is a Savior sent from God, and we want Him to save us the way we want to be saved. They didn’t see Jesus as He truly was. They didn’t see Him for what He had come to do which was to save them from their real problem, their sin. They had an external focus. They had a wrong view of themselves. They had a wrong view of their own problems. This is something that often keeps people from true salvation. They don’t understand, we don’t understand at times, people don’t understand the gravity of their problem. So they come to God, they see in the word, they see in the preaching of the word, they see in the sharing of another Christian, the reality of spiritual life in someone that they know who witnesses to them. They see something very attractive, but then they try to receive Jesus on their own terms. And this, according to this passage, is absolutely eternal death. You do not come to Jesus on your terms. Another way of saying it according to the passage is Jesus will not come to you on your terms. He will not. He will not entrust Himself to someone who wants a salvation of your own making, your own desiring. He will only come to those who come on His terms, fully surrendered.

This is something that has tremendous implications because so much of what has happened in recent years is think about the climate of evangelical Christianity. Think what this text has to say to ‘*Your Best Life Now*’ kind of Christianity. Do you not see that is exactly the opposite of what Jesus is dealing with here? It is the same as what He is dealing with, it is exactly the opposite of what He will come to. He won’t come to that. Your best life now, that is Jesus as the One who is able to give you your best life. You define what your best life is, He’ll give it to you. You set the agenda, you define the problem, you determine the solution. God’s part is to follow your lead. This is what has led to kind of the salvation of recovery and rehabilitation. It is a shallow view of sin, it is a shallow view of our problem.

We think sin is the problem that we just mess up our lives. Now think about this. Sin does mess up our lives, doesn’t it? Isn’t it amazing how devastating sin is? I mean, you can destroy your marriage, you can destroy your family, you can destroy yourself with sin. Can you not? Absolutely. But Jesus is not about fixing us for our own benefit. You don’t come to Jesus as the cosmic therapist, but that is how He is presented. This focus on recovery, the idea that we need some help. You are making a mess out of your life, Jesus can fix the mess. He can help you to have

what you've always wanted. That is such a dangerous way to come to God. It has implications for all kinds of things, our own thinking, our evangelism.

When you are sharing Christ with someone, and you can sense that what they really want is they want to have their marriage healed, and they are willing to try Jesus if He can heal their marriage. Or they want to overcome the problem of alcoholism, the sin of drunkenness biblically. Or they want to overcome any sin problem, and that is the dominant thing. They want to be clean, they don't like feeling dirty, they don't like feeling filthy. You see? That is a very self-centered problem there. Do you see how subtle that is? "I don't like being like this, I don't want to be like this anymore. Jesus help me not be like this. I can't stand being with myself." That is a million miles from this: "God I cannot believe how much I have offended You. I don't know how, I cannot even bear to look at You because of my wickedness toward You," a Godward focus of sin. And if the focus is self, then Christ will not give Himself to you. The focus must be Godward. The shallow view of sin, making a mess of my life, not liking myself, leads to a shallow view of the Savior. Jesus as life coach, Jesus as therapist.

I read a quote a number of years back and I couldn't locate it, but essentially I reference that because I'm going to use some of the wording of it, and it is not original to me. This was a minister who had been in evangelical ministry. He was a pastor. He was going to conferences, ministry conferences, learning about how to do ministry, and he said that the light came on one day, and reading the text, and evaluating his whole approach to ministry, he said this:

*Suddenly I became aware that one could use all the terms of biblical Christianity, you could talk about sin, you could talk about salvation, you could talk about Christ, and using all of those terms, you could still have as the fundamental center of reality, the self.*

That is the problem. When it is about us, and what we want, and if we present the Gospel in such a way as to meet people's needs, we are putting obstacles in front of them truly coming to Christ. Jesus will have no part of our human agenda. We have to see our problem the way He sees it. Our problem is that we are utterly sinful. I don't come to God because I need to have Him fix my circumstances or have Him fix even my attitudes and the externals of my life. I come to God because I need a Savior. I need someone to radically change me. There is no fixing. It's not like we need a boost up. The Bible says we're dead. You don't just need a doctor, but you need to be made alive.

It's interesting how these verses 2:23 to 2:25 serve as a wonderful introduction into Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus. What did He say to Nicodemus the religious leader? "You need to be born again." So our problem is that we have a wrong view of self, and we need a right view of self. Jesus tells us what a right view of self is and how it connects to salvation. Turn with me over Luke 9.

***Luke 9:23 ~ And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me,...***

He's saying, "This is what it means to be a disciple of Mine. This is what it means to be a Christian." If you want to be a follower of Jesus Christ:

***... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.***

To come to Jesus, you have to understand that you must deny yourself. It's not about our agenda. It's not about anything in us. We come to Christ, and the word *deny* here means disassociate our self. We don't want to have anything to do with us anymore. It's not about fix me. It's about, "Lord, I want to lose myself and I want to find You." That's the essence of real repentance, to turn from self, to turn from my agenda, to turn from what I want, and to turn only to Christ. It's surrender. There's no hint of Jesus coming to help us with what we want to accomplish, is there? Look at Luke 14. Turn over a few pages to Luke 14.

***Luke 14:25 ~ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.***

I remember when I was in Seminary in the late 80s and 90. Not quite as old as the early 80s, just to clarify. Don't let the gray hair fool you. It was a long time ago, though, but when I was in Seminary, this idea of kind of a man-centered Christianity was really dominant in the practical ministry side of things, how to build your church. *You have to identify felt needs and meet those. This is the way you're to do church, and the idea is draw a crowd and maybe you'll reach people with it while the crowd's there.* And that's the church growth movement if you've heard that buzzword term. That was the dominant way of thinking. I thank the Lord for putting people in my life and books in my life that kept me out of that

kind of deception, but one of the things that I kept running into when I would hear people talk about the principles of church growth is I kept remembering what the Bible said, and how utterly contradictory they were in their philosophy than what Jesus did. And just look at this. This is a church growth blunder on Jesus' part.

***Luke 14:25 ~ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,...***

He's got the crowds following Him! But what He seems to do is to seek to drive the crowds away. He's not trying to mass a bunch of people who were there with all the wrong agendas, hoping that somehow He might do a bait and switch thing and convert them. No, He says, "Let me tell you. You're following Me now. I want to tell you what it means to follow Me. If you want to follow Me, you must hate your own father and mother." There's nobody there with a felt need to hate their parents, their children, their wife, their brother, or their sisters. Nobody's wanting to have their relationships mean nothing.

Now, of course in context we know that the Bible doesn't really call us to hate literally. What He's saying is, "Comparatively, you must love Me so much more than anything else that it seems like everything else means you must hate by comparison." Do you see that? How does that play out? I was witnessing one time to a man and I could tell as I was sharing with him that he wanted his wife back. I was talking to him about the Lord. I had been told by one of our folks years ago that: *He's ready to be saved. I know he is. He's talking about the Lord.* So I went and I talked to him, and I witnessed to him, and he kept coming back to, "I just don't know how to get her back," and I'm confident with the church growth mentality that he would have prayed a prayer that day. I could have given him the four spiritual laws, he would have accepted them, and he would have prayed a prayer, and he would have been farther from heaven.

What he needed was this verse right here. "Your issue is not whether your wife comes back. We would like to see your marriage restored. There's no question about it. I'll be happy to help you with that, but your biggest issue, sir, is that you have offended a holy God, and if you die, you are going to spend eternity in hell apart from Him. That's what you deserve and it's what I deserve apart from Jesus Christ. I'm here to tell you there's good news, that if you are willing to put Christ first and turn away from everything else, He will save you." That is salvation. That's what Jesus is saying here. You must be willing to put everything else so far secondary that it does not matter. "I want to know Christ." He continues on in Verse 27:

***Luke 14:27 ~ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.***

He means it means perpetual death to self. Every day you're carrying your cross. It's not some kind of token or cute thing. It means you're carrying the means of your execution, and day after day you're dying to self. That's what it means to be a Christian. That message has no appeal to fallen minds unless the Spirit of God opens their eyes. And when the Spirit of God opens their eyes to see Christ and to see themselves, that is the most precious message in the world. That's the Gospel, and that is the true Gospel, and that's true salvation. We have to see ourselves. We have to see my biggest problem is not my circumstances, my biggest problem is not the people in my life, my biggest problem is not that my wife won't treat me right, or that my husband won't treat me right, or my parents don't treat me right, but my biggest problem is my wicked heart. That is my only problem by comparison. Everything else is nothing compared to that. My biggest problem is not that I was abused as a child. My biggest problem is my own wicked heart.

Now, terrible things are done. Satan is at work in this world and terrible things happen. There are wicked, evil things, and sometimes you're the victim in a situation like that. God never intended from the beginning of the world for sin to reign. We brought it on ourselves, but He's sovereign, and He had a purpose in even allowing those things to happen in your life. And the biggest problem that we have even when someone sins against us, when someone sins against me, the biggest problem is not what they do. The biggest problem is my bitterness, and my wickedness, and my pride in responding. That's always the reality. When you come to Jesus you have to deny self. True salvation begins at that point where we see the biggest problem is not out there, but the biggest problem is in here. When you have a right view of self, then you're able to have more of a right view of Christ. These things go together. You can't have one without the other. You can't see yourself without seeing Christ, and you can't see Christ without seeing yourself.

We have in the passage back to John 2 some help in having a right view of Jesus Christ when we find in the passage the astonishing reality that He holds Himself back. Jesus is not a waiter that waits as some divine waiter upon us to call upon Him. He is the sovereign Lord of glory, and that's what we see here. There are really two things in the passage that we see directly about Jesus that help us to see the greatness of Jesus Christ, that we need a bigger view of Jesus. We need a greater understanding of how wicked our own hearts are, and we need a greater understanding of how marvelous our Savior is, and that's what we see in this

passage. You see two things about Jesus in the passage. You see first of all that the Lord Jesus Christ knows the secrets of your heart. You see that Jesus is omniscient. That's the first thing we see.

***John 2: 24 ~ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.***

Three times He's saying He knows. He knows your heart. The word repeated twice He knows, He knew, He knew all men, He knew what was in all men, γινώσκω (ginōskō), means to come to know by experience. It's the kind of knowledge that means He's looking at, He's observing, He's weighing data, He's bringing these things in, and He knows it all without you ever saying a word. He doesn't need anyone to testify concerning what's in your heart. He knows. He knows what's in my heart. He's omniscient. So when you come to Jesus, you come to one who cannot be fooled.

I mean, we see this throughout the book of John. This is in fact another proof of Jesus' divinity and deity in John. Someone was sharing that they had some Jehovah's Witnesses visit their house, and we missed them at our house and we had the little brochure in our door, and when they come, the key issue with Jehovah's Witnesses is they believe Jesus is not God. They believe Jesus is not Jehovah, and of course, the Bible teaches Jesus is Jehovah or Yahweh. The Gospel of John is one of the places that it's so clear, and they often will bring up John 1:2. They say that where it says: ***...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*** someone was sharing that just recently they had a conversation and the guy was saying the Word was *a god*. The Jehovah's Witness was telling him that because there's no definite article.

I dealt with that a while back in the sermon, way back, but the idea basically is it's totally ridiculous. The point of the passage is Jesus is God, and for it to say what they think it should say, *Jesus was the God*, or with the definite article, it would be meaning that the Father and Son are so identical as to not be separate from personally. But the reason it says *was God* without the definite article is to show that Jesus is God, but He's a distinct Person. He's a part of the divine substance, but a separate Person of the Trinity. We believe that God is one God but in three Persons.

If a Jehovah's Witness brings you to John 1, this is what I think you ought to ask him to do. "Would you please read for me the entire Gospel of John? You believe the Bible. Read the entire Gospel of John, and note how many times John tells you Jesus is God." The biggest way he tells you of course is the *I am* sayings. This is the best thing. Have them read Exodus 3:14. Where did the name Yahweh or Jehovah come from? *I am that I am*. Now let's go back to John's Gospel and read it. *I am the bread of heaven. I am the light of the world. I am the resurrection and the life. Before Abraham was, I am. And they picked up stones to kill Him*. They understood what He meant. Just have them read the rest of John, but over and over you have stuff like this. He's omniscient. He doesn't need anybody to testify. He knows. Only God knows these things. Jeremiah 17:9 says that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Look what Verse 10 says:

**Jeremiah 17:10**

***"I, the Lord (that's Yahweh), search the heart,  
I test the mind,  
Even to give to each man according to his ways,  
According to the results of his deeds.***

Who is it that searches the heart? Who is it that tests the mind? Yahweh does. And here Jesus is searching the hearts and testing the minds. We see this in Psalm 139:1-4, where David says, "Where can I go from Your presence? You know my thoughts from afar. You even know my words before they're on my lips." The Lord knows those things, and here Jesus is knowing their hearts. Before they could even speak, He knows what's in their hearts. In Revelation 2:23, Jesus says in speaking to the church at Thyatira that He's going to judge those who are following the wicked teaching of a lady named Jezebel. He says, "I will kill her and her followers so that you may know and all of them may know that I am the Lord and I search the hearts." Jesus says that about Himself in Revelation 2:23.

So when we come to Jesus, we sometimes have a skewed view, and the evangelical world of today has a skewed view of Jesus, meek and mild, but you have to understand that yes, He's meek, and yes, He's mild, and yes He's a friend of sinners as we've sung—what a wonderful truth—but He's also the one who sees the very secrets of your heart. He is an all-knowing Christ who cannot be fooled.

We saw this in John. He knew Peter before He'd ever met him. Remember Simon is brought to Him and Jesus gives him the name Peter? "You're Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas. You shall be called Peter. I know your character before you come." Nathanael comes to Him. "Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no guile," Jesus says about him before He's introduced to Nathanael. *How do You know me?* "While you were under the fig tree having your devotion, I saw you." He knows all. So Jesus is omniscient, and also this passage shows us that Jesus is the judge. He's the one who determines that He will not entrust Himself to them. He knows your heart and He judges you accordingly.

In Acts 17:31, the apostle Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus when he says this:

***Acts 17:31 ~ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."***

God will judge the world in righteousness through a man Jesus Christ. He is the judge. So when we come to Jesus, we need to come understanding He sees everything in me, He knows me, and He is my judge, and if I have that kind of view of Him, I will not come asking Him to do my bidding. I need to come on my knees, asking Him, "Lord, You know my heart. You know what's wrong with me. Show me. Help me." And that's the way you approach Jesus and salvation. You don't come with your agenda. You come asking as it were on your knees, "God, help me. Have mercy on me, the sinner." But in that attitude, in that approach to Christ, it's so important that we understand even after we're saved that we tend to default back to this idea of going to God to deal with our surface problems, but not our real problems. Think about how we default back into these old patterns.

Charles Spurgeon, in one of his sermons, had a stunning kind of quote. It's something to think about Spurgeon saying this in the first place because of the great sermons that he preached, but listen to what he says, and see how our attitude when we come to worship, our attitude when we go to the Bible, our attitude when we spend time with other Christians, can all be wrong if we come not looking at our own hearts and our own need. Look what he says:

*Now my dear friends...*

He's talking about 2 Corinthians. He says:

*The fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age.*

He's saying the Corinthians were judging Paul rather than judging themselves. Look what he says:

*Let not any of you as he goeth out of this house of God today, say unto his neighbor, "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's house? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment, for our judgment is of the Lord our God; to our own Master we shall stand or fall. But, O men! You should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than that. You should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly consort with my condition? Was not that point a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation that I desperately need?"*

Isn't it easy to say, "Boy, I wish so-and-so had heard that"? When we find that, repent. I mean, pray for them, and then get back the point. "How does that impact me?" When we come together with other Christians, so often as we talk, we're just thinking about what we want to say and what our agenda is. We need to be ready to hear, quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, always examining our own heart, always realizing the biggest problem in my life in any circumstance is me.

Now, think about that. In your marriage, when you're having an argument and you think your spouse is just seeing it all wrong and they're not thinking biblically, they may need some correction, but the biggest problem you have in that moment is you. That's why Jesus uses that wonderful illustration. How do you help another believer in sin? You first get the tiny little, almost invisible speck out of your own eye, right, before you get the log out of their eye? *I know I have some problems, but I really see this problem for you.* Jesus says, "No, you're seeing it exactly out of phase. Get the log and the plank that's over your face, that's covering your entire view, get that out before you then reach over to get the speck."

That's how we ought to see it. Our biggest issue is always us even when we're right about what we see over there: *I see it so clearly.* That's the part of our sin nature. We can see with eagle eye the problem over there, and we can't see anything right in front of our face that's right here. That ought to break us continually. And when we know that and we come to God and say, "Lord, I'm recognizing a problem over here and Lord, there's a problem and we need to deal with that," then let us say, "Lord, help me with my judgmentalness, my self-righteousness. God, I can't believe I'm thinking only about that problem. Help me now to see what's wrong with me in this moment."

Then you're in a posture to go to help another brother or sister, serving them, because you're going on your knees. You've gone to Christ first. It's that attitude in every way that Jesus is looking for. He's looking for the attitude that comes to Him on His terms. He is the Lord of glory, and if you will know Christ, you come to Him on His terms. His issue with you and me is not fixing us for our own purposes. His issue with us is dealing with our sin, and praise His name He's able to deal with our sin. And once we come to Him on His terms, then He does a lot of fixing. You find joy. You find happiness. You find your life comes back together, but you don't come to Him with that agenda. You come to Him with, "God, I have offended You," and every time we make a mess in our lives, we need to go beyond, "Lord, look at the mess I've made." We can go to Him starting out, "Lord, look at the mess I've made," and then, "Look at the mess I am. It's me, Lord."

There's an old hymn: *It's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer. It's me. It's me, oh Lord. I'm the one who has the need. Help me.* That is a heart that Jesus always gives Himself to, and He is a friend of sinners, a friend of those who humble themselves, but He resists the proud. God, help us be humble followers of Christ.

Let's go to Him in prayer right now.

*Our Father, we praise You that You are the God of all grace, that You, Lord, have made it clear that you say, "Come unto Me." You're always inviting people to come. The way is open. You've done everything necessary for every one of us to come into the presence of the living Christ and to live with You forever. Jesus' blood is sufficient payment for everything that we have done or will do, and yet Lord, we come today acknowledging that our biggest problem is our own hearts. It's so deeply engrained in us, our own self focus. God, kill that in us. Join us to Jesus and His death in deeper ways so that that will not overcome us.*

*For those that are here that have not truly come to You on Your terms, Lord, may they today be granted grace to see that their faith is not yet genuine. Grant them grace to repent and to believe, truly to cast themselves upon Christ. We thank You that You are a great Savior, Jesus, that You're able to deal with our sin problem finally and completely, and that You will continue to deal with it all the way until we one day stand before You blameless, and ultimately, finally clean, and may that day come quickly. We pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.*



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