

**So Close, Yet So Far**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**James 7:14-24**  
**September 23, 2012**

Amen. He is our peace. That's wonderful that we have a God Who has made peace with us and also invites us to cast all of our cares upon Him. What a wonderful Savior. I want to thank Todd Guthrie for leading our worship this morning, and for Cary Clayborn playing for us. It's a blessing to have so many gifted people who love the Lord and are willing to serve. Ted and Jennifer are again out of town this week. We're grateful to God for the blessing that we have in this body. Thank you, brothers, for ministering to us this morning.

I want to invite you all to turn with me now in your Bibles to John 7. We've come, actually now that we've resumed our study of the Gospel of John, this is our third message from the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter. We looked for two Sundays at the first 13 verses. This morning we move to a new section in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. We're going to be looking at Verses 14-24.

I want to, right off the bat, remind you of the overall context of John's Gospel. One of the issues that he is dealing with when he writes this Gospel, probably about 85 AD, is the widespread rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people. By 85 AD, when John writes, some 55 years after the ascension of Jesus, the death, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ, 55 years into the life of the new church, it's become evident that more and more of the church is becoming comprised of Gentile converts, and less and less Jewish converts. In even the church itself, and its impact across the first century Roman world, it's still a small trickle, though it's a growing momentum, it's a small trickle compared to the masses of people who are rejecting the things of God.

So John has, as it were, an apologetic that some say is two-fold. One, it's evangelistic. He's writing to Jews and Jewish proselytes, to call them to faith in their Messiah, the Messiah that fulfills everything of the Old Testament. The second thing is he's encouraging those who are believing, but who might be wavering because of the widespread unbelief. He's basically saying, "Don't be surprised when people reject Him, and don't be shaken from your faith. It has been this way from the beginning." That's his message and that's a very relevant message for us today because we can be overwhelmed by widespread rejection of Christ in our day. We can be discouraged as people who even call themselves

Christians, deny the true biblical Gospel. We need to not be surprised at that, or shaken by that ourselves.

In this particular passage, within the broader context, where John is showing us, in John 7 and John 8, continuing on through his gospel, this growing opposition to Jesus. Jesus is manifesting His glory and yet there is this growing opposition to Christ. It's stunning! How could this be? Well one of the things he's particularly focusing on in these verses is how is it that those who are so close to Christ could end up being so far from Christ. That's actually the title for the message, this passage this morning is 'So Close, Yet So Far', because that's the reality of what is described in this passage. The Jews who were so close to the things of God, they possessed the Old Testament which, as Todd was talking about earlier, even the temple itself, everything about the temple, points to Jesus, points to Jesus, points to Jesus. They possessed the temple, they had the sacrificial system which pointed to Christ, and they had the festivals, the feast days. One of which is going on right here in this passage, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths. All of those pointed to Jesus Christ. They had the covenants, all of which point to Jesus Christ. Though they had all of these things, when Jesus came, they had all of these shadows of Jesus, and yet when the substance came they rejected Him. How stunning! How shocking! How can this be? That's essentially the point of what Jesus is going to deal with in this passage. How is it that those who seek so much of the outline of Christ, or exposed to the things of God, can still miss Him? That is real relevance for those of us in biblical churches, growing up in Christian homes, or sitting under the preaching of God's Word. We also have the danger that we must watch out from being so close to the things of Jesus yet it's possible to be so close and yet so far. So this passage has something to tell us. We're going to seek from it, we're going to first of all observe the scene, and then we're going to draw two principles from the passage. So let's read Verses 14-24.

### **John 7:14-24:**

*14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*

**19 “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?” 20 The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?” 21 Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”**

Let’s pray together:

*Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word. As we come to it, we come in humility asking that You might teach us. We acknowledge our need to be willing to obey. Show us, Lord, what You would have us see, and learn, and how You would have us surrender to Your Son. Grant us grace to understand and obey, and to find in Him our sufficiency. We pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

So close, and yet so far. As we look at the passage, as we watch the drama unfold, we’re going to see that two principles emerge from the text. Now let me help you out with the outline ahead of time because we’re going to spend some time just walking through the passage. We’re going to do basically two major points and then the second point is where we’re going to camp out. Those are the implications I was talking about. The second point has two sub-points, which are the two implications from the passage which help us to not be so close, and yet so far. But the first point we’re going to do this morning is we’re going to observe the scene, and then secondly we’re going to consider the implications. In a narrative passage like this it’s so important that we really let the text, the unfolding drama, appear before our eyes, and that way we’re sure that we’re seeing what God wants us to see from this passage.

### 1) Observe the Scene:

Look with me at the passage now. Verse 14:

***John 7:14 ~ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.***

The first thing we note is that he’s telling us the time. It’s now the middle of the feast. The feast lasted eight days. So this is around the fourth or fifth day, approximately the middle of the feast. Jesus has gone to Jerusalem for the feast. He

went up to the feast. Now it's interesting, in fact the phrase 'went up', when you look at the larger passage, you read Verses 1-13, you see that four different times the phrase 'go up' or 'went up' is there. His brothers encouraged Him to go to Jerusalem. Jesus says, "I'm not going to go up yet, you go ahead and go up. It's not My time yet to go up." They ask Him to go to the feast, they want Him, remember from last week, they want Him to show Himself to the crowds to recapture the disciples that He's been losing lately. Apparently, they don't really believe and they think He needs to do it their way. Well He says, "Go up to the feast," and "I'm not going to go up." Well here, the phrase 'went up' again is the same verb, and the idea is, Jesus said He wasn't going to go up, but here He is going up. Now was He inconsistent? No, what He said we saw last week. He didn't say, "I'm not going up," He said, "I'm not going up right now. My time is not yet." So now He goes up at the time God has directed Him. We see in this the sense that Jesus does nothing without submitting to the will of the Father. It wasn't the Father's time yet for Him to go up, and now is the time and He goes up. He goes right up into the midst of the feast, as it were, into the thick of it. Though He had not gone up publicly, now He does go up publicly in the most public way, at the temple, and begins teaching.

One thing that I want to call your attention to is it's interesting that we see, first of all, that Jesus, when He said He wasn't going up, his brothers may have understood He was not going to the feast at all. "I'm not going up to the feast. It's not yet My time," but then He went up to the feast. One of the things you see in John's Gospel that helps fill out the portraits that we have in the other gospels, is that John calls our attention, in the life and ministry of Jesus, to His going up to Jerusalem. If you've read the other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and you think about the picture they present, what you find in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is almost all of the action is taking place in Galilee, which is northern Israel, far from Jerusalem and Judea. Jesus is constantly there ministering in Galilee in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Well John fills out the picture by showing us that though He ministered predominantly in Galilee, He did go down for forays into Jerusalem. But the reason He didn't stay there, as we saw at the first couple of verses of John 7, was because they were seeking to kill Him. He would go briefly down there and back to Galilee because had He stayed there the cross would have come too quickly. He had to finish His ministry, and so the Lord had Him go back to Galilee and do most of His ministry there. But we see in this, John calls our attention to five different times Jesus goes up to festivals or feasts, the Jewish feasts. You have him recording three Passovers, once in Chapter 7, the Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Booths, and then in Chapter 5 He went up for another feast, and He healed a man at the Pool of

Bethesda, which is also being referenced in this passage. He healed on the Sabbath, during that festival. So five different times He goes to Judea for the festival.

What's significant about that? Well, Exodus Chapter 23, when God had called His people out of bondage in Egypt, He gives them instruction in Exodus 23:14-17, that there are three feasts every year that the men in Israel must present themselves before the Lord in Jerusalem, or at the place of God's presence. This is before there is a Jerusalem, way back in Moses' day. "They must present themselves before Me, that is before My tabernacle, or My temple." And what we see is Jesus is living in obedience to the Old Testament law. He's appearing at the feast because He is a man, a Jewish man. He's fully God, but He's also fully man. He's carrying out every detail and letter of the Old Testament law, He's fulfilling it. Galatians 4:4-5 says that He was born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law and were cursed by it.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, fulfilling the law, He is in Jerusalem for the feast to present Himself as a man as God has willed, and yet the reality is, He really is the place of God's glory and presence. They ought to be coming to where He is for the feast because we've seen that John has already told us, in John 1:14, that the glory of God dwells in Jesus. It's no longer in the temple in Jerusalem, remember John 1:14?

***John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

The word 'dwelt' means tabernacle or 'pitched his tent'. The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, pitched his tent and we beheld His glory. We see in the glory cloud, John is saying, "We've seen the glory cloud and it's on the man Jesus Christ. He is the One." But Jesus, still fulfilling the law, goes to Jerusalem, and He goes there in obedience to His Father.

Now, when He gets there, He goes right up into the center of things, at the temple, and He begins to teach. It's interesting that we see in Verse 15:

***John 7:15 ~ The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"***

One of the things we observe when we look carefully at the passage is that we're going to see in the passage dialogue back and forth, and Jesus speaks seven different times in the passage. Then you have people from the attendance of the

Pharisees, the Pharisees, the Jews, the crowds, some of the crowds, some of the people of Jerusalem. 11 different times different people speak, and at the end of the chapter we're going to have this dialogue back and forth between the Pharisees, and the guards, and the crowds, and they're all talking about, "Who is Jesus?" It's important to watch what's being said, and what's interesting to me, that jumped out at me as I was looking at this is, of the seven times Jesus speaks in the passage, this is the only time when no content is mentioned. Look at Verse 14:

***John 7:14 ~ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.***

'Was teaching' would be a better translation of the particular verb here, it was continuous action in past time. He went up to the temple and was teaching, and the Jews were being astonished. The point is not so much what He said, I mean obviously everything He said is important, but John wants us to not get bogged down with the details yet. He wants us to see first of all, the effect more than the content. When Jesus taught, the effect was they were astonished. He wants us to see the power in His words. So the Jews are astonished, and Jews means the leaders of the Jewish people. This is the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the rulers of the priests, the leaders of the people. They marveled, and then they form a question in their minds. ***"How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"*** "Where does His speaking power come from?" "Where did He learn to speak like this?" The way that you learned to speak well in that day was you study from Hillel, or Gamaliel, or one of the other Rabbinic schools. "He's never been to seminaries," is what they're basically saying. "How does He speak like this?" They are completely baffled by it. The question essentially is, "Where does His authority come from?" That's really the focus of the Verses 14-24, is the authority of the man Jesus Christ. "What's the source of His authority?" Jesus answers their question in Verse 16:

***John 7:16 ~ So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.***

"Where does My authority come from? I didn't study at the School of Hillel, or the School of Gamaliel, or the School of anybody, any other great Rabbi, I studied with My Father. That's Who I studied from. I'm giving you the teaching directly from God." He's completely different, and this was something that characterized Jesus' teaching. Remember in Matthew 7:22-23 when He's just finished giving the Sermon on the Mount, the effect of the people? They said, "His teaching is different than the teaching of the scribes, or the Pharisees. He teaches as One

having authority.” There’s something dramatically different about the words of Jesus Christ.

So they’re asking, “Where does Your authority come from?” He says, “It’s from God.” Then what we’re going to see is that He begins to answer an implicit question that’s really the question of the Gospel, which is: One so glorious, One so clearly set apart by God, One so clearly God Himself, God in flesh—how is it that people had Him right there and missed Him? That’s the implicit question: How is it that they could be so close to Jesus, Who is speaking from God, and yet they could deny and reject Him? That’s the essential question He begins to answer then in the following verses. In Verse 17, He says:

***John 7:17 ~ If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.***

He gives one of the underlying principles that we’re going to look at is that essentially the reason people did not accept Jesus Christ was because they were not willing to accept Him. They came to Him and He is manifest in the glory of God. He’s healing and He’s speaking with power. He is everything that we need. He’s the bread of life. He’s the light of the world. We’re hungry, we need to eat—He’s the bread of life. We’re in the dark, we need light—He’s the light of the world. We’re thirsty—He’s able to make from our bellies rivers of water flow. He’s everything that we need and yet right in front of us, everything that we need, and men reject Him. How is that? It’s because we come with unwilling hearts. This is an important principle. Whenever we’re witnessing to people, remember that they have a bent against receiving this. They have to be willing to obey. This is why people reject Christ. This is why, remember last week we were talking about how more light doesn’t necessarily mean that people are going to see? Light increases and yet people still hate God. I talked about the whole creation/evolution debate. How is it that there is so much evidence now for creation, scientists are gathering this every day. They are coming out for creation, but it doesn’t change anything really. I mean just a few people here and there who are willing to obey. The reason it’s not is because they don’t want to obey. So He’s saying that people come to the Word of God and they look at it and they don’t see because they’re not willing to submit.

He goes on, after He says: ***If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.***

***John 7:18-19 ~ He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. 19 “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”***

He looks into their hearts and He says, “Many of you in the crowd are seeking to kill me. Why is that? You say you follow the law and I’m telling you that you don’t even keep the law because you’re murdering Me in your hearts. You want to murder Me. I’m an innocent man. You’re violating the sixth commandment—Thou shall not murder. Thou shall not kill.” And they of course, respond with incredulity.

***John 7:20 ~ The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?”***

I love this, they act like, “Why do you think anybody is seeking to kill You? Are You crazy?” And this is a few verses later. Look down at Verse 25, after He finishes talking.

***John 7:25 ~ So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?”***

They acknowledge, “Yeah, people are seeking to kill You.” Jesus then brings up, after they say, ***Who seeks to kill You?*** He brings up one of the events in His ministry on the previous foray to Jerusalem that has created such opposition. He said, “I did one deed and you all marvel.” What deed is He talking about? It becomes clear in context that He’s talking about the time that He healed at the Pool of Bethesda, John Chapter 5. Remember the man that had been a paralytic for 38 years, waiting at the pool to try to be healed through some mysterious kind of healing idea that people had? That if you got in the pool after the angels stirred the waters you’d be healed. For 38 years he stood beside the waters and he said, “I can’t get healed because there’s no one to put me down in the waters when the angel stirs it.” And Jesus says, “Get up, take your pallet and walk,” and He’s healed. But the problem was He healed on the Sabbath. Not only did He heal the man on the Sabbath, He told the man to take up his pallet and walk on the Sabbath. To take up his pallet, which according to the understanding of the Old Testament law that the Jews had, was a violation of the Sabbath. In fact, I think you make a case that it was a violation of the Old Testament law in Jeremiah 17:21 where it says:

***Jeremiah 17:21 ~ Thus says the LORD, “Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of Jerusalem.***

What’s happening with that? The people were stumbling at this and Jesus is going to explain to them if they’re listening, if they have ears to hear, He’s going to show that the second principle is not just that you have to be willing, but that you have to also search carefully the scriptures for the true meaning and fulfillment of the scriptures. What He’s going to do is show how His ministry fulfills the Sabbath and how His healing fulfills Old Testament circumcision. He’s going to show how everything converges in Him, and if they had been reading humbly, and if they had been reading carefully they would have seen, when He came on the scene and He healed that man, the Messiah has come. That’s what they should have seen.

If my shadow is up here on the stage, you can’t see it I guess because it’s an all flat floor, but just go with me. My shadow is here, take my word for it. If I was like this, forgive me, this is getting a little silly. You’ve been around a door and you’re sitting in a room and somebody comes around it, you can see their shadow sometimes before you see them. Someone is coming, here’s the shadow, and then you see the substance come around the corner. The Old Testament is basically a shadow, and shadow, and shadow, different parts of the contour of a shadow shaping up in all of the Old Testament temple imagery, in all of the festivals, in all of the covenants, and all of the imagery in the Old Testament, the shadows are forming. Then if you were looking carefully at the shadows, understanding the principles, then when Jesus came onto the scene, you say, “That’s Him!” That is what everyone should have said. That’s what He’s saying in this passage, “If you interpret rightly, you cannot escape that He is God’s Son. He is everything that we need, and He is the One that has been promised. He has come.” That’s essentially what is being said in this passage.

## 2) Consider the Implications:

Now we followed the basic flow of thought, observing the scene. Now let’s look more carefully at those two implications in the passage. Let’s consider the implications, second point. Remember the question that we’re seeing that this passage is really dealing with is, “How is it that people exposed to the clear revelation of Jesus Christ reject Him?” How is that possible? I mean just think about that for a moment. People that actually saw Him, that actually heard Him, that saw Him give sight to the blind, or to heal a man, don’t you think in your own heart, “If I saw that, I would believe.” But thousands saw things like that and did

not believe, did not have saving faith. Why? It's not a problem with Him, it's not a problem with inadequate truth, the problem is with us. The problem is with our hearts that are so determined to be blind. That's what we see, the implications. There are two implications from the passage that basically say, "How can we be sure or how can we beware of this happening in our own lives? How can we make sure that we aren't just around Christ without coming to Christ, not close to Christ without becoming a part of Christ?" There are two implications.

#### A) We Need to Come to the Word of God with a Willing Heart:

The first is we need to come to the Word of God with a willing heart, Verse 17.

***John 7:17 ~ If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.***

We need to come to the Word of God with a willing heart. Martin Luther used to say that we should read the Bible on our knees. Not so much literally as figuratively. Read the Bible on your knees. That is read the Bible with a submitted heart that says, "I'm here to obey. Lord, show me and I will obey. I am submitted to You."

One of the things that blocks people from seeing and coming to true knowledge of Christ is their own lack of submission. They do not see because they will not see, and they will not see because they will not submit. This is what James is talking about actually in James 1. Turn over to James 1:5.

***James 1:5-8 ~ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

Do you ever feel like you want to know what God's will is for you? "I really want to know what the Lord wants me to do," he's writing. This is a principle that applies to believers after you get saved. You still have to come to God if you want to hear from God, with a submitted heart. "I want to know if I should do this, or I want to know if I should do that." Well come to God with a willing heart because if you don't come to God with a willing heart, you will not receive anything from

God. *For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man,...* That word in Verse 6, ... *he must ask in faith without any doubting...* I wish they had translated it ‘without any hesitation’. The word is actually an interesting word, it’s a word for judging, diakrinō (διακρίνω). Judge means krinō, the verb ‘to judge’, and dia ‘through judgment’. The idea is really arguing with oneself. If you come to God and you ask Him for wisdom, don’t be arguing with yourself, wondering, hesitating, “Am I going to do what He says? Tell me what You want me to do Lord as long as it’s not this.” James says, “How appalling! Do you think God is going to bother speaking to You when you are determined not to obey Him? You will not receive anything from God.” And that’s true that the essential prayer of salvation starts with this kind of a heart. You can’t come to God saying, “Lord, save me. I’m willing to let go of everything except this.” Let not that man think that he will receive anything from God.

That’s what Jesus was talking about when He said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who finds a treasure buried in the field.” How do you get into the Kingdom of Heaven? It’s like a man who finds a treasure buried in a field and for want of that treasure he goes and he sells all that he has. Do you see that? Full surrender, that he might have that treasure. Or like another man who finds a pearl of great price, and for want of that pearl he goes and sells all that he has so that he might have that pearl. That is salvation. That is Lordship salvation. You don’t come to Jesus apart from coming to Him as Lord. There is no getting saved by praying a prayer. I mean, yes you do get saved by praying a prayer, you call out to God, but some people believe you can get saved and then later you can receive Jesus as Lord as a second phase. That’s not true. That’s not biblical. That’s why Romans 10:9 says that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. You have to accept Him as Lord at the beginning or you will not accept Him. He will not accept you. But if you surrender to Him, and come to Him as Lord, surrendering all that you are to Him, He will receive you. He will by no means cast out the one who comes to Him like that. Now the rest of your life is trying to live that out every day. Every temptation, every moment, trying to continue to walk consistent with our original commitment to Christ.

He’s saying that the reason people don’t receive Him, He’s focusing on the human side of it. Remember John 6 told us that the reason people won’t receive Him is because the Father is not drawing Him. That’s the sovereignty of God. Here we’re looking at the other side of salvation. John is showing us, the Spirit of God is showing us the human side. What is it that keeps people out of Heaven? It is their

own will? That is true. That is biblical. The people that are in Heaven are in Heaven because of the grace of God that's overcome them, but the people who are in hell are there because of their own free will. C.S Lewis has that great quote:

*Hell is God's great monument to the free will of man.*

People say, "I don't want You. I don't want You. I don't want You. I don't want You," and He says, "Your will be done forever." So people don't receive the Lord because they want to be the masters of their fate, the captains of their soul. If they never reject that mindset they will never see Christ. Don't be discouraged when they don't see Christ. It's not any indictment on Him, it's an indictment on them. For those who have submitted and see Him, He is so wonderful we are perplexed. How can you not? When you lay things out before an unbeliever, and you lay out the Gospel and the glory of the Gospel, how Jesus is all that you need, how the Bible holds together, and every stream of scripture finds its ocean in the ocean of Christ. You see the beauty of it. How can they not see? And our hearts break for them, and yet don't be surprised. Continue to be earnest and present that because the Lord, even in our reasoning with them sometimes grants new life. But when that happens, marvel at the greatness of God, and the power of God. It's not our persuasiveness, it's His power. But for us, we need to remember, continue to remember, full surrender. If we want to hear from God we must fully surrender. If you're asking God for direction, and you're not willing to do what He says, no matter the cost, you will not receive from Him any blessing, any help. You must be willing to surrender to Him. This is what He's saying, "If you come to Me you must deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow me." Deny self. "All I want is Christ. My hands empty I come. Nothing in my hands I bring. Only to the cross I cling."

In our sanctification the same thing is there. The standard is full surrender. We have to ask the Lord, even as we come, "Lord, I want to be surrendered. Help me. I want to do Your will. I want even to want to do Your will." The Lord will bless that prayer. That's the prayer of the man that said, "Lord, Jesus, I believe. Help my unbelief." You go to Him with it though. "Give me a willing heart." The song we sang earlier, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart Lord, take and seal it." "I feel this proneness to wander Lord," but cast yourself upon Christ, and as best you can, affirm your surrender to Him, and He will continue to work. So the first implication is we are to come to the Word of God with a willing heart.

B) We are to Come to the Word of God with a Right Mind:

The second implication, the reason people have rejected Him, and the implication for us is: We're to come to the Word of God, not as with a willing heart, but with a right mind. Verse 24:

***John 7:24 ~ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.***

The exhortation is two-fold. First, negative, and then positive. ***Do not judge according to appearance...*** Literally the word here means 'that which is seen with the eyes, on the surface, the face of it'. He's saying that when you come to the Bible, you don't just come with a kind of a quick, easy sort of approach. God's Word is not to be interpreted just by kind of a surface, casual glance. Much damage is done from that kind of interpretation, and the legalists of Jesus' day, that was the way they were bent. They were looking when He healed, and He asked the man to get up and carry his pallet. They were consumed with the surface of it. "You just called a man to violate the Sabbath." He just healed the man. They're missing the obvious for the surface. At least they should have paused and pondered, and they should have come willing to submit. They should have been praying, "Lord, I don't understand this. This is outside of my frame of reference, but help me. Is this a prophet? Is this someone from You? If it is, I will submit." But they didn't come like that because they didn't want to obey. They had God at a distance in their religious system and they were comfortable in their religious system, and their power, and their life, and they wanted it just like that.

That's a danger we must beware of because we are in the same school, or the same tendencies are among us as were among the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the theological conservatives of the day. They believed every word of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, to be inerrant. They believed in eternal life. There were others among the day, the Sadducees that were the theological liberals of the day. But the Pharisees missed Jesus because they were looking on the surface, they weren't judging rightly. He says, "Don't judge just according to appearance upon the surface, but judge rightly. Verse 24, that's the positive part of this command. Judge with righteous judgment. The word 'righteous' is a good translation. It's that word which means 'according to the standard, according to the intention'. The idea is to judge with righteous judgment, is to judge the Word according to divine intention. What was it God is saying here? Not, "What do I want this to say," but what is God saying here. Not to look merely on the surface, but if you're reading rightly, you're looking for, striving to find, "What is God's intention in this passage?" Jesus is essentially saying, "Listen, I'm ministering here at the feast, and the reason so many of you are rejecting me is because you will not submit to God.

And secondly, you have not read the scriptures rightly. If you are willing to submit to God, and if you had read those scriptures rightly, this would be the greatest example of revival and spiritual awakesness that ever happened because I'm in your midst, you would recognize me." And what He essentially says is, I love this, He doesn't in this particular passage say, "Listen to Me because I am the I am." I mean one of the strong messages in the Gospel of John is Jesus' divinity. He is God. "I am that I am," was the name of Yahweh. That's what Yahweh means, and the "I AM" saying in Jesus are sprinkled throughout John's Gospel. "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the shepherd." "I am the door." He's saying, "I am. I am God."

But there is this other side of Jesus' ministry, He's fully God and He's fully man, and here He is answering, He's basically again condescending to them and saying, "Judge Me according to your own standards. Judge me according to the standard of the prophets. Is what I'm saying consistent with all that you've received?" And of course the answer is, it is absolutely consistent. What's interesting to note is how He deals with, I mentioned that they were upset because He healed on the Sabbath, and how He deals with it, look at Verse 21:

***John 7:21-22 ~ Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 For this reason Moses has given you circumcision..."***

Really that could be translated as 'regarding this', or 'on this account'. "You're upset about Me healing on the Sabbath. I want to deal with that now," He's saying. He says, "You're upset that I healed on the Sabbath, but Moses gave you circumcision, but really not Moses, it was really before Moses, it was from the fathers. Abraham was given circumcision by God, and on the Sabbath you circumcised a man."

It was a common practice among the Israelites throughout all the days of the law, up to the time of Jesus, was that they would circumcise a young man on the eighth day. The eighth day after his birth he's to be circumcised, it must happen on that day according to the law. So if the eighth day falls on the Sabbath what happens? He's circumcised on that day. Nobody gets upset about the priest who performs the circumcision because He is fulfilling the law. Jesus is essentially saying, "If you really understood what circumcision was about, if you really understood the spiritual significance of circumcision, you would see that I spiritually circumcised that man on the Sabbath." The argument is from the lesser to the greater. "You sanction a man doing a physical rite, the rite of circumcision, because of the law. I

did that which circumcision pointed to on the Sabbath, and for that you want to kill Me. Do you not see you've missed the whole point of circumcision? And you've missed the whole point of the Sabbath.”

What I want to spend some time now talking about is how, when you read the Word rightly, you see that all things converge in Jesus, and the two things He's chosen are circumcision and the Sabbath. And I want to show you how reading rightly, the Old Testament would have made clear what Jesus had come to do. Look with me at this whole idea of circumcision. Circumcision now was the sign of the covenant. When God entered into a relationship with Abraham, He said, “This is your part of the covenant. You are to circumcise yourself and every male on the eighth day. You are to cut away that skin as a testimony to the fact that you belong to Me.” And when God gave that, was it about the circumcision? Was that really the big deal? Of course not, it was a picture of a spiritual reality, and you see this unfold if you're reading below the surface, if you're reading just looking at divine meaning. Why would God give that? Is that really that significant? No, of course not. You see it even as you continue to read through. Turn with me to Genesis 17, and we're going to do a Bible study on circumcision and on the Sabbath. Genesis 17:9-14, God has entered into a covenant relationship with Abram. Now He's given him the name, in this chapter, Abraham. The covenant relationship is the Lord bringing man into a relationship with Himself. Remember we're lost in sin. How is it that we can come back to God? It's through covenant, it's through God's work of building a relationship, and circumcision is the sign of the covenant. Look at Verse 9:

***Genesis 17:9-14 ~ God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13 A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”***

To come into a relationship with the living God this must happen. Now what we're going to see is that this was just a picture. The Lord is baby-talking with us. John Calvin used that image that God, as He's revealing the way back to Himself, and unfolding the plan of redemption, as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus unfolds in the Old Testament, He is prattling with us. He's talking as you do with a two-year-old, then a five-year-old, then an eight-year-old. He's building our understanding of what it means to have a relationship with Him. What He's saying in this is that, "For you to come to Me, something has to be cut away, something radical has to happen to you." We see it's not about the outward circumcision. When we continue to read on, when you continue to look at like Deuteronomy 10:16, but turn to Deuteronomy 30:5-6. Deuteronomy 10:16, Moses, at the end of his ministry says:

***Deuteronomy 10:16 ~ So circumcise your heart,...***

Do you see that? It's not about the act in our flesh, it's something that needs to be cut away from our hearts. Then in Deuteronomy 30:5-6, the Lord makes this even clearer. How is it that men come back to God? How is it that men come into a relationship with God? Look at what He says in Verse 5:

***Deuteronomy 30:5-6 ~ The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.***

You cannot love God unless He circumcises your heart. That's what has to happen. I want to give you some other verses to look up.

***Jeremiah 4:4 ~ "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord And remove the foreskins of your heart,..."***

***Jeremiah 24:7 ~ I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.***

***Jeremiah 31:31-34 ~ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,"***

***declares the LORD. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”***

***Ezekiel 36:24-28 ~ For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.***

Circumcision was always intended to say, “What has to happen for you and me to come into a relationship with God, into a covenant with God, is we must have heart surgery. We need new hearts.” That is the meaning, the right judgment of the Bible’s teaching on circumcision.

Now, Colossians 2 shows where that was fulfilled. Why did God give circumcision way back to Abram nearly 2000 years before Christ? It was to point out that this event is coming. Verse 9:

***Colossians 2:9-11 ~ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;***

You were circumcised in the circumcision of Christ. What’s the circumcision of Christ? You read on.

***Colossians 2:13-15 ~ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the***

***certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.***

What he's saying is that Jesus' circumcision was the cross. Jesus took our sins on Himself. He took all of the ugliness, all of that which is lost about man, the guilt, the pollution of all of our sins that everyone who would ever believe, was laid upon Christ and there in His death, God cut away and removed it from us. In that we are given new hearts. It's that that gives you a new heart, the cross of Jesus Christ. It was always pointing at that. Now back to John 7.

Jesus is saying, "Don't you realize that when I healed that man, I made him well physically and I made him well spiritually? I gave him a new heart. You guys allow for circumcision on the Sabbath, and you don't allow for spiritual salvation on the Sabbath? You've missed it totally."

And then the Sabbath itself. The Sabbath itself is fulfilled in Jesus. That's the other irony about this. I'm going to give you some passages to read. We're not going to go through these now.

***Genesis 2:1-3 ~ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.***

The Lord, after He creates the world in six days, He rests. Why does God rest? He does not need rest. Was the Lord tired from creating? Remember how He created? He said. ***The Lord said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."*** "Whew! I am so tired. I've got to rest." The Lord does not get tired. He does not sleep or slumber. He's not in need of rest. Why did He rest? He created a rest, the Sabbath, for man. Jesus says in fact, "Man is not for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was for man." The Sabbath was God's pausing to glory in His works, creating a time for us to pause with Him in relationship and glory in His work. So when He gives the Sabbath to the people of Israel in Exodus 20, The Ten Commandments, He says, "The reason I'm giving the Sabbath is for in six days I made the world, on the seventh day I rested. So you guys, on the seventh day, every week, stop and glory in My work of creation."

What's interesting is, less than 40 years later, in Deuteronomy He reiterates the law. That's the whole point of Deuteronomy, the second getting of the law. He

says, “On the seventh day, rest and don’t consider just My works of creation, consider my works of redemption. The reason you are to rest on the Sabbath is because I brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand, delivered you from the domain of darkness, made you my people.” Do you see this? The Sabbath is about resting and reflecting on the work of God in creation, the work of God in redemption.

Then fast forward to Hebrews 4, which we read earlier. There remains a rest for the people of God. The whole point of the Sabbath was to say, “The way you come to be with God, in fellowship with Him, is you cease from your own works and you glory in His works. You trust in His works. The rest is salvation and it’s all by faith.” So Jesus, here He is. He is the fulfillment of circumcision, He’s the fulfillment of the Sabbath, and they have a problem that He’s doing this on the Sabbath. If they’d been reading rightly, they would have seen that the Sabbath is the shadow, circumcision is the contour of the shadow. If they were looking at it rightly, when He walked around the corner, “That’s Him!” That is the way the whole Bible flows together. We could spend hour upon hour looking at the different contours of the shadow, that’s what the Old Testament is, but glory to God, Jesus is the substance. That’s why Colossians 2:16 says, “Don’t let anyone be a judge concerning you the Sabbath day, or religious festival, or new moon, about how you keep the Sabbath, or whether you keep a festival. These things are merely a shadow, the substance is Christ.” All of that was pointing to Him. So here these people are at the feast all upset. Somehow in their faulty understanding of the shadow, they missed the fact that the substance is right in front of them.

What we have to do when we come to God is we have to come submitted to Him and come willing to dig in and study His Word carefully. That’s why scripture tells us to be diligent to show ourselves approved a workman who need not be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth. You know God has made His Word so that you don’t just get diamonds. This is the way it is in the world, you don’t go out and find diamonds on the ground. You have to dig. You don’t find gold that way. You have to dig. God has made His Word that way. You have to seek Him with all your heart, humbly, but earnestly. This is what we’re to tell unbelievers, “If you will just read this Gospel, read John, read Matthew, and ask God to give you a willing heart to believe, be willing to submit as you look at Jesus Christ, you will believe.” Now God has to give them a new heart, but we’re to beckon them that way. If they don’t believe, don’t be discouraged. We’re to keep trusting Christ, for He is worthy. Let’s go to Him in prayer.

*Father, we thank You for Your kindness to us in Christ. We thank You for the salvation that You've given us in cutting away our sinfulness and our pollution. That no matter how we've departed from You, You are willing for us to come back to You. You say, "Come," all we have to do is just surrender and cast ourselves upon Christ. "Some think I'm too sinful, I've done too many bad things." Jesus says, "Come." "I'm too dirty." Jesus is able to make you clean. There's nothing to hinder us, nothing stands in the way. Just bow the knee and come to Christ. Father, we're thankful that You are a God of grace and mercy, that You overflow with love and kindness. That though You were above the highest Heavens, and You dwell in the high and lofty places, Your Word tells us You also dwell with the humble and contrite of heart, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to lift the heart of the contrite. Father, help us be faithful to You. Help us to be satisfied in You. And we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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