

**Unmasking Spiritual Hypocrisy**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 8:37-47**  
**February 17, 2013**

We are continuing to look at this marvelous passage of God's Word. Today we'll be looking at Verses 37-47 of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, 37-47 of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. I didn't add any verses to the Scriptures. It only goes to 59, so. We'll look at these 11 verses though, John 8:37-47. The title of the message this morning is 'Unmasking Spiritual Hypocrisy'. Hypocrisy, the noun, actually the act of being a hypocrite, and the word hypocrite is one that is a little more common in our usage. A hypocrite is someone who claims to be something he is not. One who makes himself out to be one thing when he is in truth entirely something else. The word hypocrite actually, though it's not in our text, is a biblical word and it comes from a Greek word. It's actually a transliteration. The English word is a letter for letter rendering of the Greek word *'hupokrites'*. The *'hupokrites'* in ancient times was the actor, it was often applied to actors who performed upon the Greek stage in the amphitheaters throughout the Greco-Roman world. They wore masks as they acted and they were pretending to be something they were not. That's the nature of an actor, to be able to enter into a character who is not who you really are, but to play it so well that you come across as that person.

So this passage actually records for us Jesus unmasking the hypocrites that were before Him. We've seen as we looked at it in previous weeks that as Jesus preached His sermon 'I Am the Light of the World', and the dialog that happened after that, we're told in Verse 30 that there were many of those who were listening who believed in Him. Then from Verse 31 all the way to the end of the chapter, we have the Lord Jesus Christ in an intentional and determined fashion, as a loving shepherd, He tends to these who might become His sheep. He, in a determined and intentional way, deals with issues at the very center of their hearts. We see what happens is most of those who hear him are unmasked as something that they were not. They professed to be believers but they are not, in truth, believers. This has been an emphasis in the Gospel of John in general, in Jesus' ministry in particular, but we've seen it in John's Gospel a number of different places where the expression is that there are a number who believe and yet it's not as it appears.

That initial profession of faith in John 2:23, after Jesus had been preaching and doing miracles at His first Passover after He begins His ministry, John records that first visit to Jerusalem for the Passover after His ministry has been launched. He's

been baptized and He has now begun His Messianic ministry. As He goes to Jerusalem He is preaching, and He's healing, and it says there in John 2:23, "Many therefore believed in Him because of the signs He was performing at the Passover. But Jesus was not entrusting Himself to them because He knew what was in men's hearts. There is a play on words going there, the word 'entrusting' in English translates the same root word as 'belief'. In the Greek you see it more clearly, both are forms of the word 'pisteuō'. "Many believed in Him..." That's a 'pisteuō'. "But Jesus was not entrusting Himself..." 'pisteuō' to them. In a sense, many believed in Him, but Jesus did not believe in them because He knew what was in their hearts.

That sets the stage for John 3. The next thing John records, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus, the man who knew so much Scripture, and who was a very religious person, the teacher of Israel, Pharisee of the Pharisees, member of the Jewish Counsel, the Sanhedrin. Jesus talks to him and says, "Nicodemus, you must be born again. It's not enough to have a religious fervor, it's not enough to possess a kind of faith, you must have a change of heart."

So this is the emphasis throughout the Gospel of John. We see it again in John 6 when the crowds respond to Jesus' initial preaching, or His miracle, the feeding of the 5,000. They want to make Him king. You find yourself, if you read carefully and thoughtfully, it's always a challenge when we read the Scriptures not to read it in light of what we've already seen. We already know the story. We need to try to read it afresh, as if I were seeing this for the first time. What was the impact? When we discipline ourselves to read like that, we find ourselves continually astonished. When you read the Gospel of John like that, like for instance John 2:23, "Many therefore believed in Him because of the signs He was performing." Man, this is awesome. So many have come to faith. This is the beginning of this. That's what you would be thinking, right? But Jesus wasn't believing in them.

Then in John 3, "You must be born again." In John 6, you have as He feeds the 5,000 with those five loaves and two fish, He feeds 5,000 men, probably 20,000 people, and they want to make Him king. They're ready to come and take Him by force. They're so excited. The fervor is there. It's like the crusade has happened and the front of the auditorium is thronged with people. But Jesus continues to speak the Word to them throughout the sixth chapter to keep filtering out false converts. He says hard words to them. We see this is His pattern. When someone comes with initial faith the Great Shepherd of our souls knows that the saving faith is that which goes down to the very depth of man's soul. He continues to till the soil like a gardener trying to work the seed down into the soil, lovingly with great

care, skill, and precision, He works their hearts, and in the process, there are a number who the majority tend to turn away. Then there are those who are saved.

We see the same exact pattern happening here in John 8. You have this hopeful word in Verse 30:

***John 8:30-31 ~ As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.  
31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him,...***

And let's read from here down to Verse 47. We're going to focus in on Verses 37-47, but we'll read this for the context.

### **John 8:**

***31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"***

***34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."***

***39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40 But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in***

***him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”***

Let's pray together.

*Father, as we come to Your Word, we're always mindful of our absolute dependence upon You and Your grace. We know that we need to be taught, so we come asking that You might illuminate this Word. Make it alive in our minds and our hearts, and help us to place ourselves under it, in love and submission to Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name, amen.*

You're at the doctor's office and you're there because your wife wanted you to go, or maybe, rarely, your husband wanted you to go. I guess that happens. Normally, it's our wives that help us do that, but different families, we all have our different dynamics. You're at the doctor's office and the doctor says, "How are you doing?" You say, "I've never felt better in my whole life. I've been working out a little bit." Go with me here. It's not true for me, but it might be true for you. "I've been working out a little bit, and I feel really good. Yeah, I'm getting older but I feel like I'm really healthy." "Do you have any complaints, anything bothering you?" "Not at all, no complaints." "Well, good, good." So he presses on you and does some initial examinations, he takes some blood work, and then you get the call in a couple of weeks to come back in for the results of your physical, your 'well' physical. He says, "Listen, there were a few things that we found that are of concern that we need to check into. Your blood came back in such a way, and this was the result. There are some irregularities there and we're going to need to do some more tests." "I feel great! I feel better than I did two weeks ago when I came in here." "Well, the test results say that you need to have some other tests." So you go over to the testing place and you have the CT scan, or the x-ray, or the MRI, or whatever test it is the doctor calls for and you wait for the test results. You come back in and they read the test results, and they tell you that there is now an issue. "I still feel great. I feel better than I felt even the last time I was in." "No, there's something here. There's a problem. We need to do a biopsy." "I don't have time for a biopsy." "We're going to do the biopsy." You do the biopsy, and now it's time to have surgery. "I still feel great. I think you're wrong, Doc. I feel wonderful. There can't be something wrong with me." Of course we know that we wouldn't be that foolish. In our day we have confidence in our medical profession, but the reality is spiritually we can be just as foolish as that.

That's exactly what happens right here before us. The Great Physician is tending to those people who have come to Him with a kind of initial faith. With great skill and insight He is testing them, examining them, and they keep giving the report, "I feel great," but He keeps probing, and discerning, and He finds that the spiritual condition of many of those before Him is of the most critical nature. They stand in a much, much, much more precarious position than they ever imagined. In fact, the ultimate diagnosis is stunning. Something they never would have imagined. The diagnosis is, "You are children of Satan." Nobody came to the doctor that day expecting that diagnosis. This passage confronts us with the most important realities in all of the universe. What is more important than our souls and the certainty of our salvation? What could be of greater import than that issue? It's so easy for us to pretend that things are all right, to convince ourselves. Self-deception is one of the most deadly things of all. If you lie enough to others you begin to believe it yourself and you don't know that you're lying. We can lie to God, as these are before us.

It's interesting, look at their reports as they go to the Great Physician, what they say and how they continually affirm that everything is okay. Jesus told them in Verse 32, **...and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" Here is their first response to His initial probe: "We are Abraham's descendants and we don't need to be free. We already are free. We feel great." He says to them, in Verse 37, He gives the concession, "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, that is that you are physically descended from Abraham. I know that quite well, but you are not spiritually descended from Abraham because there is a real incongruity going on here. If you were spiritually descended from Abraham, you would not want to do what is in your heart right now, and what is your heart right now is you want to murder me." Because of Him saying they were slaves to sin, a murderous rage has come up in their hearts. He's told them that they were slaves to sin. "We've never been slaved spiritually. We might have been subjugated by nations but they never subjugated our hearts. We are children of Abraham. We have the inheritance of Abraham. Who are you? You Galilean, You Nazarene, You stranger from up in that mongrel area of northern Israel, to tell us, the Judeans, that we are not children of Abraham." He said, "If you were children of Abraham, you would not be doing what's going on in your hearts right now." So He's telling them the test results. "The initial test results, there's a concern." Verse 39, their answer again:

***John 8:39 ~ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."***

Not just, “We’re descendants of Abraham,” but “He’s our father.” They’re taking it a little further in their affirmation of their wellness. **“Abraham is our father.”**

***John 8:39 ~ ...Jesus \*said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.***

His next assessment is:

***John 8:40-41 ~ But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 You are doing the deeds of your father.”***

It’s interesting, you have this medical image that I’ve been playing on, but it’s also, to change the metaphor, it’s not just that there is a cancer that’s under the surface that needs to be discovered, but there is this issue of paternity. It’s amazing how this rises to the surface in this passage because 9 times from Verse 37-47 you heard the word *‘father’, ‘father’, ‘father’*. **“Abraham is our father.”** “If Abraham were your father, than do the deeds of Abraham.”

***John 8:41 ~ “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.”***

Here’s their other time. Jesus said, “I’m still looking, the next test results say that you have a problem.” They say, “Not only is Abraham our father,” this is, “I feel better than I felt when I came in for the first test. God is our Father.” Look at the level of self-delusion. Here the Son of God, sent from the Father, the Great Physician, is tending to them, and as He tends to their hearts, they raise up from within them this resistance, this hardening that will not let Him have His way. This is not something that is something that is just peculiar to the Jewish people. We know that. But it is something that is particularly dangerous to all religious people, and particularly those who are close to the truth. You know Satan has his ways, various ways of deceiving people. There are people that are obviously children of Satan. I mean people that are into witchcraft, people that are into Satanism and the overt worship of Satan. There are those people. People in various nations throughout the earth that have grown up under animism, or grown up under various idolatrous religions like Hinduism where there is so much idolatry that we can look at it from the outside and say, “Look at how the bondage of Satan and darkness is so great.” Thank God that I’m not there, and yet there, from this passage, there is a danger, perhaps even more profound, perhaps even darker, that you can stand right beside the fountain of life and die of thirst, all the while rejoicing that it’s right

there. Because that's what he's describing here. He's talking to Jewish people, religious people who had even in the hearing of the preaching of the Gospel have said, "We believe in Jesus." That's what it said in Verse 30: *As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*

They were believing that He is the Messiah. They are believing that He is the unique One of God that the Old Testament prophesied would come. But as He begins to probe their hearts, He's basically telling them, "You have an initial faith. You have heard Me teach. You have seen some miracles that I've done. You've sensed in My voice, a ring of authority that sounds to you like what you've been looking for, and of course it really is what you should have been looking for. But you don't yet understand the nature of My salvation that I bring, and the nature of who I really am. So keep listening." And so that's what He's doing. He's probing their hearts to say, "Listen." Because what they saw, they saw that, "You're the Messiah of God," and they wanted to take Him, as natural man does, we want to take God and fashion Him according to our image. So they wanted to take Jesus, they said, "He's the One, and we will take Him and accept Him as the Savior that we want." This is what they were doing in John 6. I mentioned when He fed the 5,000 people. They saw a miracle and they said, "This is the Holy One of God. This is the Prophet we've been waiting for." There is no other explanation. Five thousand men, 20,000 total people can't be fed with a little basket of lunch for one kid. "We've seen a miracle greater than what Moses saw, the manna from Heaven. Therefore, this is the One and we're going to take Him and make Him king, take Him by force." Just think about that, "We're going to grab this Savior by force and make Him do what we want." Do you see how far that is from true salvation? So close, but yet so far.

So this is the problem, this is what is still going on as He preaches to this other group of people now that were up in the Galilean countryside, near the Sea of Galilee. This is now back in Judea, back in Jerusalem at the temple, the Feast of Tabernacles. As He preaches to them, they're hearing His message and putting their own concepts on it. "You're our Messiah, yes. We're glad to receive You. This is the Messiah." Jesus says, "The nature of my Messiahship is entirely different than what you think. You think you need a Savior from Roman tyranny, you think you need a Savior from social injustice, you think you need a Savior saving you from the sin that is out there around you. No, you need a Savior to save you from the sin that is within you." He's appalled with what's going on out there, but when it comes to you and me, and us, the God of Heaven, as we read from Hebrews 4, who uses His Word to search our hearts. It's like a living and active two-edged sword that it says, "No creature is hidden from its sight, but we're all

laid bare and open before Him with whom we have to do.” He sees everything about us, and what’s most appalling, when He looks at you, and when He looks at me, and He looks at us individually and personally, is the sin in here. This is what we must be saved from, and that is what is most offensive to us, and that is what, until this grace opens our hearts, we cannot abide. Because the essence of man’s problem is pride. Not only that, but we want to be our own God.

At the beginning of sin, what was it? The serpent said, “You shall be like God. Don’t submit to God, be like God.” That is the dream of fallen man, that is the refrain that you hear throughout every century of the history of mankind. “You will be like God.” The Gospel comes and says, “You must bow on your face and deny yourself, and take up your cross, and die daily, and put your entire trust in Me, and surrender to Me as Lord.” You must not only believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, but you must confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. It must be a surrender of the heart and life, and that is the most difficult thing.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing the conditions of the people in front of Him, is as the Great Physician, dealing with the hearts of His people, not worrying about whether He’s going to give them a good report. Wouldn’t you hate to go to a doctor that told you what you wanted to hear? He didn’t tell you what you needed to hear? “You have cancer. You need to go through surgery. You need to go through chemo. You need to go through radiation.” That’s certainly something that hits all too close to home for so many, and for our congregation in recent years. In our family, so many have been touched by that horrible disease. So many of our loved ones have been taken from us through that horrible disease. But wouldn’t you hate to go to a doctor that just told you, “Everything is fine because I want you to be happy when you come into my office. Aren’t I a great guy?” Then you don’t feel so good after a while, and then you find out that you could have been saved if he had told you in time, but now it’s too late. The Lord Jesus Christ is so kind and so good that He would never give the report, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. So we see that in this passage.

What I want us to look at is, we’re going to frame the discussion, we’re going to focus on Verses 37-40 this morning. It will be a two part message, ‘Unmasking Spiritual Hypocrisy’. We’re going to focus on this part of the passage because it focuses on the contrast between Abraham and Jesus’ hearers. Next time we’ll look at their claim that they are children of God. Here they’re claiming that they are children of Abraham. **“Abraham is our father.”** What the Lord Jesus does here in this passage, and He really establishes for us, we’re going to look at three points. The first is their claim, we’ve kind of really gone over that already. Their claim is

that everything is okay, “*Abraham is our father.*” We’ll take a minute for that, briefly on this point. Then the second thing is the Lord’s diagnostic test. And thirdly, the criteria that are contained in that test, or that determine the results of the test. The claim, the test, and the criteria. Those three points.

1) Their Claim:

They’re convinced that everything is okay. “Abraham is our father. We’re not born of adultery or fornication. We have one Father—God. Everything is fine.” As we look at this we ought to examine the state of our own hearts. Are we trusting in our national identity? I’ve always thought, “I was born in America, therefore I’m a Christian.” Probably not many of us are in that particular boat here. I was born in a Christian family. I was taught the Word from the earliest time. I professed faith when I was young. Here I am in a church where we preach the Bible, where we believe in sound doctrine. We try to look at the Bible as it is revealed, not fashioning it according to our own preferences, but hearing God’s Word. So we’re in a reformed Baptist church. Those things are certainly good, but it doesn’t mean that we’re saved, does it? Just to be in proximity doesn’t mean that we are saved.

The Jews that Jesus was talking to, they could look at their lives and look at their circumstances, and they could say, “Wow, of all the families on the face of the earth, we’re the one group of people who possess the truth. We have the Torah.” Sometimes we can feel like that. You know, there are so many different Christian groups that don’t have the truth, or are false Christian groups.

I was talking to a gentleman the other day, a Mormon. I didn’t get very far in the conversation. I’m looking forward to following up with him. This isn’t the way you approach the Mormon, “How can you possibly believe that?” That’s not the first thing to say. “Are you crazy?” That’s not a good way to start the conversation. But when we look at it, and we look at what they really believe, we feel that, don’t we? “How can you believe that? You believe that this is the New Testament of Jesus Christ and the Book of Mormon is like the Third Testament. Then you’ve got the Pearl of Great Price and these other writings that are additional revelations of God.” Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon. I’m sorry, the Book of Mormon is not in any way consistent with the Old Testament or the New Testament. Totally incongruent. If you read your Old Testament and your New Testament carefully, and if you started with the Old Testament, and you read through the New Testament, you would never accept the Book of Mormon. It is false, false, false.

Now, we can see that. “Man, that’s out there. That’s whacko.” Then you have within Christian circles, you have churches that don’t state that they believe some kind of whacky doctrine like that. They seem to believe in the essential doctrines of the faith, but they don’t preach the Bible. They don’t talk really about conversion. Then you have, in more biblical circles, people who are trying to be faithful to the Word. That’s really the closest analogy to the group of people Jesus is talking to. It’s really more for us than it is for those folks out there because the Jews that He’s talking to really believe they are, of all the families of the earth, the one group who has the truth.

In fact, Paul when he’s talking about the fact that so many of his brothers are unbelievers in Romans 9, that haven’t really been saved, he talks about the privilege of being a Jew and he says, “To the people was given, they were the Father’s.” I mean, the Jewish people possessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their father. He says, “They had the glory. They saw the glory of God visibly manifest.” That’s their heritage. They had the covenants, they had the law, they had the sacrificial system testifying to them the way of salvation. Think about how different that is from every other family of man on the face of the earth. How great was their knowledge of truth, and yet this same people right here, Jesus is saying, “Though you have all of these things, you are as much a child of the devil as the Satanist in the farthest reaches of the world. It’s staggering. The claim needs to be tested.

## 2) The Diagnostic Test:

Jesus makes clear that there is one test that needs to be examined, like a litmus test. They say in Verse 39: ...**“Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.** The diagnostic test is *your deeds* or it could be translated *works*. Do the works of Abraham. It’s not your words. It’s your deeds, He says. The Bible’s taught this consistently. I mean, it’s easy to act as one thing and be something else, and our words can be presenting one image, but in our hearts, we’re something different. The prophet Isaiah, voicing the word of God, says, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” Jesus, in His first major sermon recorded in the New Testament, Matthew 7, the Sermon on the Mount, talks about beware of the false prophets. In Matthew 7:15-23, He’s telling them already there are going to be some false teachers that are going to come along. They’re going to come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. They’re going to be people that are teaching apparently the Gospel, talking about Me, that are really not sheep at all. They’re wolves. Well, how are we going to recognize them? If they’re wolves in sheep’s

clothing, they look like sheep. That would have been the natural question. How will we recognize them? Jesus tells them in Verse 16:

***Matthew 7:16 ~ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.***

You will know the false teachers from the true teachers by the fruit of their life, not their words. Their words are important, and we're supposed to test every word. I'm not saying they aren't, but He's saying that the ultimate litmus test is the life. The profession has got to match it, but when you're trying to test a profession, if someone doesn't profess faith in Christ, then certainly they're not even being tested. They haven't even gotten to the point of getting the test. But the test for us who profess faith is our works, our deeds.

He goes on to say in Verse 19:

***Matthew 7:19 ~ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.***

He's talking about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, righteousness – deeds that exhibit those characteristics, and then He underscores the importance of this not just for false teachers but for ourselves in Verses 21 to 23, because He's saying, "Look, it's really about what you do, not what you say." Look what He says. He skips on ahead. He says, "Rather than talk about the false teachers you need to be discerning about, I wanted to talk to you about eternity," and He says in Verse 21:

***Matthew 7:21 ~ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.***

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but who? He who professes to know My Father? No, he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he will enter.

***Matthew 7:22 ~ Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'***

Look at that last clause. ...*you who practice lawlessness*. The evidence of saving faith is a changed life. Not a perfect life, but a changed life where there is now good fruit where there used to be only bad fruit. Where there was self-interest and self-concern and focus on me, my, my, mine, now there is a focus on Christ and others, and a servant's heart.

James says the same thing in James 2. He said faith without works is dead. People sometimes take James and they – in fact, turn over to James 2. Let's look at this. This is important. Scripture interprets Scripture. That's a very important principle, and God teaches us infinite realities. The infinite mind of God is being made known to us. He prattles to us. He baby talks to us, and in teaching us, Scripture tends to emphasize certain points in certain places, and you have to bring them together to walk the balance. And here you have a passage in James that really emphasizes the importance of works, which is right along what we're doing in John 8, the deeds of Abraham. In Verse 17, he says:

***James 2:17 ~ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.  
18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."***

Do you see that? True faith is going to work. Now, the reality is, and this is the balance, and Romans makes clear, and James himself believes, he's going to go on here and talk about how Abraham's faith, when he believed, it was reckoned to him as righteousness. The Bible teaches this: that the way that you and I are saved is that we no longer trust in ourselves.

Remember the passage we read earlier from Hebrews 3 and 4. It said that we're to enter into rest, and the Sabbath, the seventh day, was created by God to show us what salvation is. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4). The reason God rested on the seventh day – it's always interesting. Stop and ask yourself, "If I'm reading this for the first time, what would I think?" If you're reading the creation account, God creates this on the first day, this on the second day, this on the third day, this on the sixth day, and then on the seventh day He rested. Wait a minute. Why does God need to rest? Was He tired? I mean, let's even think about how He created. He just spoke. It wasn't like He had to even form and fashion everything. He's so awesome and mighty that He just speaks the word and the universe comes into being.

So when He finishes on the sixth day, He doesn't need rest. Why does He rest? He's teaching us something. What His rest is, is Him pausing to glory in what He

has done. For six days He has created. Remember the refrain? There's a refrain throughout the Genesis account of Genesis 1. The Lord saw all that He had made, and behold, it was good. It was good. It was good. It was good. And after He creates on the sixth day man, behold, He saw all that He made, and behold, it was very good. And then He rests. He's resting and enjoying the glory of what He has done. And then when He saves the people in the Exodus – remember out of Egypt He goes down and He saves them through Moses? He calls them out and He gives them then the Sabbath commandment, the fourth commandment. ***Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.***

He connects it in Exodus 20. “When you think about the Sabbath day, think about that I created the world,” and then later in Exodus, He talks about the Sabbath commandment again in Deuteronomy, and He says, “The Sabbath Day is for you to reflect on creation, in all that I did in creation. Join Me. On that day, you rest from your works and glory in My work.” And then later He connects it.

I can't remember the verse. I apologize for this. But there's another time He says in talking about the Sabbath, “The reason that I've given you the seventh day is I want you to rest and think about what I did when I delivered you from Egypt. So reflect on My work of creation and reflect on My work of redemption. Take this day, cease from your works, and look at My works.” The author of Hebrews is saying that is the way you're saved. You stop your own works and you stop and you look at the work of God, and you glory in the work of God, and you join Him in glorying. “Great things have You done, oh Lord. Behold how great a salvation He has made known. The arm of the Lord has saved us. He is our righteousness. He is our provision. Everything that we need, He is. He is the Great I AM. He's everything that we need.

So salvation is when we stop working and we trust. That is salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. It's His gift received by faith, the empty outstretched hand of a beggar, Martin Luther said. You reach out. Nothing in my hand I bring. Only to Thy cross I cling. But there's this sense I'm not holding onto anything else either over here. I surrender all and I cling to the cross. The balance of what James is saying is when you come to Christ like that, you came to Christ not on the basis of your works. You came on the basis of faith. So you came to Christ by faith alone, but saving faith will not remain alone. Works will follow it. This is exactly what you see in Ephesians 2, one of the great passages on faith. In Hebrew 2:8, he says that we are saved by faith apart from works, so that no man may boast. We're not to boast, because we're saved by faith, not our works. But then in Chapter 2:10, right after that, right after he talks about we're saved by faith apart from works, he

says, “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Do you see that? Apart from works, now that you’re saved, the joy of who you are in Christ will show itself in good works.

I was just showing you James 2, faith apart from works, and I’d encourage you to read that passage more later, but let me show you in Romans. Sometimes people say Paul and James don’t agree with each other. Foolish unbelieving scholars will say something like that, because they don’t understand. If you read James carefully and you read Paul carefully, they agree perfectly. They’re complimentary pieces of the same truth, but Paul is the one who makes really crystal, abundantly clear, that it’s not about what we do. It’s about what Jesus does. It’s a little more clear than anywhere else in the Scriptures. It’s like it comes to its fullest revelation in Paul, but Paul also talks about what we do, and when you read the Word carefully, you see stuff like this. Look with me at Romans 2, and Paul’s talking about how you know when somebody’s saved. To the certain people who think they’re saved, he says, “This is how God’s going to judge.” Look at Verse 8. Look at God’s criteria for judging.

***Romans 2:8 ~ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil,***

God renders to every man according to his deeds. He’s going to judge those who do evil. But look in Verse 10:

***Romans 2:10 ~ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

I remember when I was reading that and teaching through Romans some years back, I wrestled with that, because that looks like he’s saying that we’re saved by works, that the people who are going to receive glory, honor, and peace are the ones who do good. But you’ve got to put it in context. What he talks about in Romans 1:17 is righteousness comes through faith. He talks in Chapters 3 and 4 about how righteousness comes through faith, but what he’s saying is righteousness with God comes through faith, but when you’re right with God, you will work and it’ll be evident in your life. That’s the balance. That’s exactly what Jesus is saying in John 8, that ‘do the deeds of Abraham’ that’s where you look. You look not at what somebody says, so much as what they do. Show me your faith by your works, James says. So that’s the second point. The diagnostic test is our works.

### 3) The Criteria:

There are two criteria we're looking at. It's like we're reading a test and we're looking at two particular items on that test. The test is your deeds, but there are two elements that you're going to read out on that as we look at it. We see that in Jesus words. He's able to tell them that they are not children of Abraham because they don't do the deeds of Abraham, and it's evident in two ways. He's looking at their deeds, saying, "Your deeds don't match up to Abraham's deeds," and here are the two areas I'm looking at when I look at Abraham's deeds:

The first area, the first criteria, is what is your active response to the word of Christ? That's what He says. He says, "You're seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. This, Abraham did not do."

***John 8:37 ~ I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me (your act of trying to kill me), because My word has no place in you.***

"The reason you're trying to kill Me is My word has no place in you. My word had a place in Abraham. My word has no place in you. What is your response to the word of Christ?" There's an interesting word there in Verse 37. My word has no place in you. I'm reading the New American Standard. The NIV says, "You have no room for My word." Both of those are pretty good translations. The idea of this verb is to make room, to give ground, to spread out. It comes from a noun which means an open space. It means allowing for something to enter in. In fact, the same word is used in John 2:6 when we saw the miracle at Cana where Jesus turned the water into wine. Those water pots there, we're told in John 2, that each would hold 20 to 30 gallons. They were big water pots. The word *hold* is the same word as this. You see that? You can pour in up to 20 or 30 gallons. There's that much room inside of them.

He says that the defining criteria of someone who is not really truly saved is that they don't make room for the word of Christ. They don't yield. When it comes and it comes with its sharpness, they harden themselves against it. They don't receive it. They don't allow it to come in and do its work. And the word of Christ is sharp. It's living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces. It does heart surgery. So our attitude toward the word in a personal way – sometimes we can read the Bible and just think about how bad other people are. No, the Christian, the true disciple of Christ, is one who's disciplining himself. Like a sheep, remembering what matters is it's me, Lord, that has need today. Let Your word do its work in me. Search me. Know my heart. Try me. Know my thoughts. See if

there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Do Your work in me.

We see it as how we respond when the word does cut. Do we fall back away from Christ? Remember in John 6 we mentioned that passage where Jesus feeds the 5,000, and then they act like they're going to make Him king, and then He kind of filters out the group over time. Remember He talks about and He has all these hard words that He says to them? He's doing heart surgery, saying, "Do you think I'm a king to deliver you from Rome? No, I am the Bread of Life. I'm everything that you need, but it's not what you think you need. I know what you really need," and then He uses that offensive image. He uses that image that we looked at some months back, "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no part in Me." I mean, the image is that of cannibalism. Jesus is using the most jarring image to show them that the death that He's going to die is the most offensive act that will ever happen in all eternity. It's more offensive, it's beyond our imagination how awful it is that the Son of God be nailed to a cross, that the sinless Son of God bear the wrath of a Holy God against sin, and then have this wrath poured out upon Him. That is so ugly, so offensive, that that's how great our need of salvation is. That's where He's coming at that metaphor. Spiritually, it's like you're eating My flesh and drinking My blood.

It says in Verse 60 of John 6 that when the people heard this, they said, "This is a hard saying," and many departed. Many of those withdrew and no longer walked with Him, and then later, John 6:66 says that even more disciples left Him, and Jesus says, "Will you also leave Me?" And what did Peter say? Peter and the disciples had heard those same hard words, and Jesus has a way of speaking things that are offensive. Will you stay under His word and realize that if I'm offended it must be that the problem is not in Him, the problem is in me? And if we stay under His word, we find that that was exactly what the problem was. It was me, Lord. You are so wise. You are so perfect. Everything that You said is perfect. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. It's sweeter than the honeycomb. When we stay with it, it becomes the sweetest thing in the world, more to be desired than infinite riches, but it cuts at first. What does Peter say? Jesus says, "Will you also leave Me?" Peter says, "Where would we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life. Where would we go?" That's the heart of the disciple. He gives place to the word. We wrestle with it. There are times where we struggle with it. There are times where we really don't understand. There are so many things in the Bible that if you look at them honestly, they are troubling at the front end. But you stay with it and you keep looking at all especially in light of the cross, and you look and

think if God loved me enough to do that, He's good and He can be trusted. I believe. Help my unbelief. Cling to Him.

So how do you respond to the word when the word comes to you? One of the ways you can really examine how you respond to the word, and one of the toughest ways to deal with the word is when the word comes to us through other brothers and sisters in Christ. God in His wisdom tells us that we have to be engaged in ministering the word to one another. When you look at the New Testament carefully, it's all over the New Testament. We saw in Hebrews 3, "Encourage one another while it's still called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Keep speaking the truth to one another." Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16). Remember how I said that the 'you' in Colossians 3:16 is a plural? It's ya'll. Let the word of Christ dwell in ya'll richly. How does it dwell in us? By admonishing one another, speaking into one another. So I need people to admonish me. You need people to admonish you. We need to admonish one another. We need to love each other and be on the same team.

We can turn this around and become people like referees, "I'm blowing my whistle. I saw you stepped out of bounds. I'm blowing my whistle." The referee is not the most popular person on the basketball court, is he? You don't become a referee and expect to be liked. You're not on the team. But the good news is none of us are referees. We are teammates. We're coaches. We're player coaches working together. We're all coaches and we're all teammates, and we're supposed to come along and say, "Hey, listen. I see something. You may not realize this, but you're dropping your elbow a little bit when you're swinging, and I think that's why you're popping up." "Really? Don't give me that. I don't want to hear that kind of nonsense from you." No, if you've got any sense, say, "Thank you. I'm dropping my elbow? Okay, I'll be thinking about that."

That's what we need, and sometimes it's a lot more personal, and listen, this is the other thing. Sometimes we think we have to wait til the person coming to us has the right attitude when they bring the message. "Ty, you have a problem and I see it's this." "I'm sorry. I can't receive your message because you have a bad attitude about my problem." Now, isn't it right that whenever we give a message to each other, we're never perfectly right? I mean, even if we prayed and we worked through it, there still may be a little bit of pride because we're sinners. If you're waiting til somebody comes along with the right attitude to tell you something, you're not going to be helped, because they're never going to be perfect.

What are we supposed to do? Humble ourselves under that word. Test it. Hold to that which is good, like 1 Thessalonians 5 says. Test it. Receive it gratefully. “Thank you for loving me enough to speak to me.” In fact, when you look later on, look at Leviticus 19:18 in context. That is the second great commandment Jesus quotes: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. It’s astounding what the context is for love your neighbor as yourself. Do you know what the context is? *You shall surely reprove your neighbor and not share in his demise. Love your neighbor as yourself*. Love reproves. That’s not a very American idea, is it? That’s not a very Christian Evangelical idea, but the Bible says we need that, and if we’re humble and if we’re working at being humble, we can make it a lot more easy.

We need to be wise when we communicate and all that, but the reality is what this is saying is you and I need to humble ourselves under the word of God. When someone comes with a concern, we need to in a decisive way say, “Lord, I need grace right now. They see this attitude and there is some concern here. I don’t know why this heat’s coming at me, but let me see whatever light is here. There may be more heat than light, but let me make sure I get the light that’s there.” And the question is, let me ask you this: How do you receive correction? It’s tough, isn’t it? But if we’re going to follow Christ, we have to be people who are willing to be corrected and learn to receive correction from other imperfect people.

We have a Biblical Counseling conference next week that 41 people from our church are going to. I’m just thrilled. I can’t believe that we’ve got that number. It’s just super, but one of the things that I’ve learned in counseling others and in having to deal with and encourage people, and in my own life I see this, is that when you get counseled from someone - and counseling is just discipleship. We call it counseling because it’s kind of the lingo out there, but really it’s discipleship. You have crisis discipleship. *I have a problem, a serious problem in my marriage. I need help*. Well, all you need to do is follow Christ. Let me help you. I’ll come alongside you and help you follow Christ. Well, what you do is when you’re counseled by someone, you realize if you get together for awhile that the guy talking to me doesn’t really know that much. *I think I know more than he does*. You may have that experience. *I think I know more than he does. I want somebody more qualified*. We’ve had this happen before. *I want somebody more qualified to counsel me*. Well, that attitude in itself is all wrong.

Now, sometimes there might be a certain situation where we’ve looked at it and we have to deal with that, but the root problem is any believer can help you with the word of God. Any believer. And what we ought to be saying is, “Look at my life and tell me what you see, and I’m going to try my best not to put up my dukes and

just let you speak the truth into me. I'm going to test it by the word. I'm going to try to be loving in my response. I'm not going to take everything you say. You're not going to be right on everything. I know that, but I'm going to try everywhere I can to humble myself under it, and God will do amazing things when our hearts are like that. So the question is when people have come and corrected you, how have you responded? Have you withdrawn? Have you pulled back? Then repent of that.

This is another passage that I wish we had more time on. We may come back to this next week, but let me mention it. Matthew 18:15-20 is the passage on church discipline. You go to your brother when he sins. If he doesn't respond, you take two or three others and then you go to him again. If he doesn't listen, you tell it to the church. If he doesn't listen to the church, treat him as a pagan or tax collector. Then it says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then it says. "For wherever two or three are gathered in My Name, there I am in their midst." What Jesus is saying in that passage is it's in the context of shepherding, that when we go and reprove another believer, Jesus is saying that when two believers go to reprove another believer, Jesus is there. And so when you don't respond to correction, when two believers come to you and you don't listen to them, you are spitting in the face of Jesus Christ. That's how serious it is. So how you receive the word is how you receive Christ, and we need to make room for His word and make room for Jesus.

The criteria is first your response to the word, and secondly your response to Jesus Himself. How you respond to the word is how you respond to Jesus. And the fact is Jesus wants us to be surrendered to Him. Unmasking spiritual hypocrisy means that we let the Lord pull the mask back. We let the Lord as the great physician look into our hearts, and we say, "Lord, whatever You find there, fix it." And this is the wonderful thing. If we come to God this way, "Lord, whatever is in here, fix it," He never turns that person away. No one is going to be in hell who really wanted to be in heaven. No one. If we come to Him and say, "Lord, I don't know if my faith is genuine yet, but I want You," and cling to Christ, if we have the attitude of, "Lord, save me. I believe. Help my unbelief," what did He do to that guy? He healed him. He didn't say, "I'm waiting for you to get your belief right." No, the man said, "I believe. Help my unbelief," and He healed him. Our Lord is infinite in compassion, but what He wants us to do is humble ourselves. Don't tout your resume. Fall on your face. "Save me, Lord. You are my only hope. You are my only possible Savior." Go to Christ.

Let's go to Him in prayer right now...

*Father, we thank You for making a way for us to be saved, such a glorious way for us to be saved, such a costly salvation. It cost You Your Son. It cost Him everything. He left the glory of Heaven. He left the right hand of the throne of God, the highest point in the universe, and He went to the lowest point in the universe, and on the cross He experienced Your wrath. He was in hell itself, as it were. Such great heights to such great depths, and He finished the work, and He said, "It is finished!" When He had drunk the last dreg of Your Holy wrath against sin, He said, "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit." It is finished, paid in full, and there remains no more wrath, no more need for payment for those who believe. We stand in awe of that salvation.*

*Lord, yet at the same time, as we looked at Your Word this morning, we see that there is a danger of coming up short. You know our hearts. Lord, you see everything. There are no secrets from You. Every motive, every intention, and every thought is absolutely laid bare. You see all. Lord Jesus, we ask that You might deal with us, show us, everyone, the true condition of our hearts and help us to walk in true faith, trusting in You. We thank You that You are mighty to save and willing to save, desiring to save. We pray that You would be glorified in hearts that rejoice in You and reflect You in our increasingly changed lives. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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