

Pride and Prejudice
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John 12:34-36
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Turn with me in your Bibles to the 12th chapter of John. We're still in the larger section that we've been in, but we are moving to a new subsection this week. We've been looking the last three weeks at the power of the cross, and Jesus' dramatic statements about His impending death, and the significance that it would have for the world. What we want to look at now is the response of the crowd because that is the next thing John highlights for us, and I think he makes it quite clear that he is saying something significant about the way the crowd has responded to Jesus for the purpose of his readers.

Remember when we are reading the Bible, we want to read it in context, and it means certainly you read it in the literary context. You think about what comes before, what comes after in a book. You think about a passage in light of the whole of Scripture, but also you think about it in light of the kind of context between the author and the audience, and the purpose of the author, so you can interpret correctly what the author is saying in light of his larger purpose. We've talked about the Gospel of John, and its purpose a number of times. John is writing near the end of the 1st Century A.D., 85-95 A.D., somewhere 50-60 years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. He is the last Gospel-writer, he is the last one to write a Gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are already there, almost the whole canon is finished except for this book, and a couple of others, and of course Revelation.

Now, as we think about that, what we realize is John is writing to Jews and Jewish proselytes primarily, throughout the Mediterranean world. He is writing, and we can see this because as we look at the book, he assumes the knowledge that a Jew would have in the 1st Century. He assumes some things, takes some things for granted, that seem to imply he is writing to predominantly, and his focus are Jews and Jewish proselytes. That is Gentiles who have become Jews, but who are meeting in the synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world. He is trying to convince them that Jesus truly is the Jewish Messiah, that they should believe on Him. He says at the end of his book, "Many other things did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, but these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing you may have life in His name." He writes to them and as he unfolds the evidence before them, there are places where he lets them look at how people responded to Jesus during His



earthly ministry. This is one of those places. The sense is, “Look at how the Jews responded to Jesus then, and beware you don’t do the same thing,” is the force of it.

I’ve titled the message ‘Pride and Prejudice’. Yeah, I wasn’t crazy about that title. It seemed clever when I first thought of it, but less so the more it has gone on. Well, I titled it that because what we see is, the question we are looking at in this passage is: *How do you approach the word of God? How do you come to the word of God so that you can receive from the Lord what He has for you?* So that you will receive blessings, so that you will receive enlightenment, that He will teach you. It is very important the approach with which we come to the word of God. What we see modeled for us in these unbelieving Jews is essentially that, pride and prejudice, these are two attitudes which God resists. He is not going to speak to them in the way that He would speak to the humble, to the teachable. So we’re going to ask the questions, *How do we come to Scripture? How should we come to Scripture?* If we’re believers today, many of us in this room are believers today, it still applies. Not just how you get saved, and come to the word of God with humility, but no, *How do I continue to be sanctified? How do I continue to grow in grace? How do I approach the word of God?* That is the subject we want to look at. Now I want us to read Verses 27-36. Our focus is the last three verses, 34-36 today, but to set the context we’ll start at Verse 27.

John 12:27-36 ~ “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” 30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” 35 So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”



These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that as we come to Your word, that You might help us to approach it rightly. That we might put all of our hope in You and Your grace. We are empty, Christ is full. Lord, we know nothing, and He possesses all truth and wisdom. Just speak to us, Lord. Your servants are listening. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now what we see in this passage, it is one of those passages that is kind of easy at first to read over, and not really stop and reflect on. That is why it is so important to engage our minds. One of the things we should do when we come to the Bible is be ready to work, and think, and valuing that this is the word of God. We ought to give it that kind of effort. When we see Jesus saying these dramatic things that are so filled with just Gospel hope, when He says:

John 12:31-32 ~ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

The power of the cross He set before them. This is the time where they should be just surrendering their hearts to Him. But what we see in Verse 34 is their response is not at all what we would expect, or what we would hope.

John 12:34 ~ The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

What's going on here? What the crowd is doing is they have, as they've listened to Jesus teach, they are following some things pretty well. They are tracking along at some of what He is saying pretty well. They understand clearly that He is claiming to be the Messiah. This is the time where they understand that because their whole question shows that. When they say, ...***"We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever;... well Jesus hasn't claimed to be the Christ directly in this passage. But they understand that He has claimed to be the Messiah without using that word because they say, ...You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"*** They know Son of Man equals Christ, "You're saying You are the Son of Man." In Verse 23 He said, "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." And then He's told them, "For the Son of Man to be glorified," 'Son of Man' was a Messianic title, "The Son of Man is to be

glorified. He is to be displayed in all of His majesty.” And how is that going to happen? Verse 24, He’s going to die. Then after He says, ...***Father, glorify your name.***” they hear the voice out of Heaven, ...***“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*** That ought to make an impact. Jesus said, “This didn’t happen for Me, it happened for you. I don’t need this, you need it!” Then He declares the glory of the cross. “Listen to what is going to happen when I die, judgment is upon the world. The ruler of this world that is binding you up in darkness is going to be cast out, and I will draw men from every tribe and kindred to Myself.” They are like stuck, they understand He said He’s the Christ, but they can’t get past what the implications are of what He is saying. “You are the Christ and yet You are going to die? That doesn’t make sense to us!”

So if you look at this on the surface even, it seems that they are asking a question that is actually kind of a legitimate question at first glance. “Hey, we’ve heard out of the law that the Christ, when He comes, is going to remain forever. We’ve heard out of the law that the Christ is going to remain forever. How can You say the Son of Man must be lifted up?” They either understand He is going to die on the cross, or He is going to be taken away. Either way they know He is going to be taken away. “If the Son of Man is going to remain forever, how can He die?”

Now that is actually a pretty good question. This is where, again putting our reasoning on, our sanctified reasoning as we look at the Scripture, how could Jesus have responded to that? You know He could have started to explain, “Listen, you guys are right in one sense. You understand that the law does say that the Christ will remain forever,” and there are a number of verses that teach that. Isaiah 9:7, remember after Isaiah says, “For unto us a Son is born, unto us a child is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulders. His name shall be called ‘wonderful counselor’, ‘mighty God’, ‘Everlasting Father’, ‘The Prince of Peace’, and of His government there shall be no end.” Psalm 89:35-37 talks about the fact that when the Messiah comes, He reigns forever. Zechariah 9:9, Ezekiel 37:25, a lot of verses in the Old Testament that speak about the eternal reign of the Messiah.

So they see that, and they say, “What You are saying contradicts what we know to be true from the Old Testament.” There is an apparent contradiction. There is a discrepancy in their minds. So they have a problem and it is right to be questioning like that, isn’t it? We know that Luke says in Acts 17:11, Luke the author of Acts says this about the Bereans. Paul is the one going about preaching, remember? And he has preached in a number of places already in this missionary journey. The Thessalonians were just wonderful Christians. They turned from idols to serve the

living God. They did it so quickly, responded to the word with such faithful obedience. Well Paul goes to Berea after that and Luke says this about the Bereans, “The Bereans were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica,” which is very high praise because the Thessalonians were very highly commended by God. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians you see Paul never rebuking them for anything. They are not like those crazy Corinthians, just have all kinds of problems. The Thessalonians, he’s basically saying, “You are doing so well. Just keep up the good work, and keep it going.” So when Luke says in Acts 17:11, “The Bereans were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica,” that ought to perk up our ears. “Well what was it that made them more noble than the Thessalonians?” And he says, “They were more noble-minded because they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what the apostle Paul was saying was true.”

Now here they have an apostle who is speaking for God and yet they were checking what he said against the Old Testament revelation that they had. They were searching the Old Testament Scriptures to see if what he is saying matches up. God says, through Luke, the inspired author of Acts 17:11, “That is what I want to see My people do, okay? That’s good to be checking this out.” Well in one sense it appears at first glance like maybe that is what is happening with these Jews. “Wait a minute, what about Psalm 89? What about Isaiah 9:7? What about all the other places where it seems to teach that the Christ is going to live forever?” And you would expect, this would be a great time for Jesus to then say, “Well, listen guys, you need to understand something about biblical hermeneutics. I appreciate what you are doing. Well done.”

Now He doesn’t say that at all because they are not really doing what I just said that we think they might be doing. They are not asking anything, they are declaring something. They are basically saying, “Listen, we don’t need to listen to You anymore because You have been discredited. You are a fraud!” There are some things in the text that I’m going to explain in a minute that will show that, but also we know that because of Jesus’ response, because Jesus doesn’t answer their question. He could have said, “Listen, guys, you are doing well, but you’ve got to remember Scripture interprets Scripture, and it is true that the Messiah will reign forever once He comes, and I am going to reign forever. I’m going to win at the cross, My Kingdom begins, and it continues forever. But you don’t understand there are a lot of other passages in the Old Testament that say that the Christ must suffer.”

Remember what He said to the guys on the road to Emmaus? Remember Jesus, on the day after He is resurrected, he is walking to Emmaus with two disciples and they are talking about what happened that day? Jesus said, “Hey, what are you guys talking about?” basically, and they said, “Haven’t You heard? You don’t know what happened in Jerusalem,” and they tell Him what happened. That Jesus was crucified and that they had hoped that He was bringing the Kingdom. They had *hoped* He was bringing the Kingdom. Then Jesus says, “Oh you foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer and to enter into His Kingdom? Have you guys read your Bibles? The Christ *has* to suffer. It is obvious.” It is more obvious than the fact that He is going to reign forever in the Old Testament. I mean in reality, think about how obvious it is that Christ must suffer.

We could just start with Genesis, we could just take the book of Genesis and show how Christ has to suffer, and we could preach for hours on that. We’re not going to do that, but let me just give you a couple of things. Genesis 3:15, when Adam and Eve sin, the Lord gives the first proclamation of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15. This is the *‘protoevangelium’*, the first preaching of the Gospel. When He says to the serpent, God is speaking to Satan, He’s speaking to the serpent and He says, “I’m going to put enmity between your seed, serpent, and the woman’s seed, and you will bruise his heel, and he will bruise your head. There is going to be a conflict between your seed, the seed of evil, and the seed of the woman, and the victory is going to be won when you bruise his heel as he bruises your head.” The picture is a snake biting somebody as the foot crushes their head, there is still a wound on the foot. That is the cross. There it is, the way God is going to break the reign of evil. The way, as John 12 said, the ruler of this world is going to be cast out, is, “I must have My heel bruised. How could you guys miss that?”

He could go on to say, “What about Genesis 15?” Remember Abraham makes the covenant with God and God tells Him to cut those animals in two? I mean to make a covenant with God he is like cutting an ox in two. I’ve cut a chicken that way, not a live chicken, but you know you buy a whole chicken, and you cut the chicken in half, it makes a really good grilling chicken. You know? Half a chicken together. Anyway, sorry about that, I got distracted, but you cut the whole animal, you cut a cow in half and you separate the parts. You cut a lamb in half and you separate the parts. And then these parts are blood, and grime, and all of the smells associated with that, and then the way they would form a covenant is two people would make promises, and then both of them would pass through the pieces. Great symbolism in that, and it meant that, “If I don’t keep my promise, let me be as these animals.” Well that day that God makes the covenant with Abraham, one of



the interesting things you see as you read that is Abraham never walked through the pieces. God walks up and back through the pieces. God makes promises and what essentially God is saying is, “Listen, if I don’t keep this covenant, let me be as these pieces. There is no way I’m not keeping My promises. I’m just condescending, I’m baby-talking with you. It is unthinkable that I would not keep My word, but the fact that you are not walking through these pieces Abraham, the fact that I put you in kind of a stupor, a dream-like state as I’m doing this so that you can’t even get up, is I’m walking through the pieces because if you don’t keep this covenant, let the curse of the covenant still fall on Me.” That’s the Gospel! The only way that we can be saved is for the curse of the covenant to fall upon the substitute.

Then Genesis 22, which we talked about last week, Abraham and Isaac. Abraham offers Isaac and God says to him, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and take him to the mountain that I shall show you, and offer him as a burnt offering there.” What was He doing? He never intended Abraham to offer his son, He was showing Abraham what must happen for Abraham to be saved. “I’m going to send My Son, My only Son, whom I love, and He will have to die.” Do you see that? That clear in Genesis and it just keeps on going—the Exodus, the Passover Lamb. How can you be delivered from darkness unless the Passover Lamb dies? Leviticus, all the way through. So for them to sit there and say, “Wait a minute, the Christ has to suffer,” shows that they really aren’t reading their Bibles very well. But Jesus could have stopped and did the little bit of Bible study that I just did. He didn’t. He didn’t say to them what He did to those guys on the road to Emmaus, those two disciples because it says that then beginning with the law and the prophets, He began to show them all the things that the Old Testament said about Him. He did the Bible study with them, why did He not do it with these Jews?

That is the kind of question we need to ask. Why did He instead ignore their question in a sense? They say, “Who is this Son of Man? What kind of Son of Man are You talking about?” Jesus doesn’t answer them. He says, “For a little while longer the light is among you, walk while you have the light so that darkness will not overtake you.” He said, “Listen, I’ve told you enough. Believe what you know right now. The time is short.” It is God’s nature not to continue to throw pearls before swine. He recognizes in the heart of these Jews that the crowd is already rising up against Him. He recognizes in them the wrong approach to the word of God, the wrong approach to God Himself, and that’s what we want to talk about first.



Two points this morning, the wrong approach, and then the right approach. The wrong approach to God's word, and then the right approach to God's word. The first one, the wrong approach, we'll cover kind of quickly and spend more of our time on the right approach.

1) The Wrong Approach to God's Word:

A) They Are Proud:

The wrong approach to God's word exhibited by the Jews is that of pride and prejudice, two sub-points. They are proud. They don't think they have any need to be taught. They are really trying to teach Jesus. In fact, you see this even clearer in the Greek. This is actually one of things that is good about some of those amplified Bibles, they will show this from time to time. In general, I think the NAS is the best to study, or the ESV, just to read the English text, are such good translations, but occasionally something comes out that I wish they would translate a little more. Because really what this says in the Greek is, "We ourselves have heard out of the law that the Christ is to remain forever, and how can You Yourself say...?" In the Greek the subject is already there in the verb. In English, we have to provide a pronoun to go with a verb. We have the pronoun '*we have heard*'. In the Greek, '*have heard*' contains the '*we*'. It is already there. It is like a lot of other languages, right? The pronouns are already there. It already has person, verbs have person and number already.

Well in the Greek what happens is you have a phrase that already says, "We have heard..." and then they supply the pronoun '*we*' beside it which makes it emphatic. "*We have heard. We have heard.*" You see? It's like that, and yet "*You say...*" What's with that? They are setting themselves up against Him. "*We, the Jewish people, we the people of God, we have heard, we ourselves have heard out of the law, and yet You, You say, and then who is this Son of Man?*" It is scorn dripping all over that. It is pride and it is prejudice.

B) They Have Prejudice:

They've already made up their minds. They are not listening, they are not open. So I think what He is saying is to the ones out there among the crowd who still have eyes to see, and ears to hear, to the small number out there He is saying, "Hurry and believe. You've already heard enough. What more can I say than what I've already said? The cross is everything. Trust in what you've heard." The prejudice, they've cited the Old Testament and that settles it. They are so confident in their interpretation.

It is amazing how pride and prejudice go right along with ignorance so easily. I mean, these guys don't know their Bibles at all, but they think they do. "Hey, wait a minute. We know this verse over here and it says that." It is amazing the pride of our sinful hearts. Man, it's just part of what we are in sin is we puff ourselves up with so little reason. I mean, think about this, they are talking to God in the flesh, and they presume to talk down to Him. It is grace that He doesn't just destroy them. He holds their life-breath in His hand.

But what we see is, when you come to God with that kind of a mindset, when you come to God with pride, and you don't need Him to teach you. When you come to God with prejudice, you've already got your mind made up, know this, you will not hear from God. He is not going to speak to you. He resists the proud, He gives grace to the humble. Those who think they know already, those who profess themselves to be wise become fools. It is those who acknowledge they are fools who in humility cast themselves upon His grace and goodness that become wise. So they have entirely the wrong approach, and from this we can learn what the right approach is.

2) The Right Approach to God's Word:

How do we come to the word? This has all kinds of applications. It has applications for how we should read our Bibles. How we should, as we memorize and meditate on the word, how we should approach it every time we come to the word. Every time we hear a sermon, how should we come to hear that sermon? Every time we go to a Bible study, every time we ourselves study to teach a Bible study, how should we come to the word? There are six things that we can draw out that are helpful to us to understand the right approach to the word of God. So there are six sub-points in this second point. The second point is *The Right Approach to God's Word*. The first thing that you do when you approach God's word is (they all start with the two letters BE) be reverent.

A) Be Reverent:

That's the first point. I mean, when you come to the word of God, that when you come to this Book, when you look at a verse, when you look at a passage, when someone is talking about a passage, you are hearing the word of God. It's so basic and obvious, and yet isn't it amazing how we forget that? I mean, when Scripture speaks, God speaks. The God of heaven is speaking through this book. So that means that we should come, in a sense, with a totally different attitude, a sense of reverence and fear, fear and trembling.

In fact, Isaiah 66:2 is interesting. In Isaiah 66:1, the prophet Isaiah, God speaking through the prophet, says basically in Verse 1 He's talking about, "What kind of house will you build for Me? What kind of house do I need you to build for Me?" Basically He says, "I don't need a house. I fill the heavens. I don't need a place that I can dwell for you to meet with Me." So the question is, "Where does God dwell?" but also, "How do you meet God? How do you approach God?" What do you need to do to approach God? "I don't need a house," really is what He says in Verse 1, "to meet with you." He says in Verse 2:

Isaiah 66:2

"But to this one I will look,

To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

God says, "The one that I will meet with is not the guy who shows up at the temple with an offering. That's not really the thing that I'm into. That was just a type. I'm telling you who I really am. How I meet with people is their heart. The one who's humble and contrite and who trembles at My word, he's humble, he knows his need, and he trembles before Me. He doesn't come in audaciously demanding things."

This is one of the problems with the whole Word of Faith movement. "You must declare your reality and God's got to do it," like He's a short order cook. You just tell what you want and He's obligated to do it. That's ridiculous. That's nothing to do with the character of the Bible. I like what J. I. Packer says. Think about this. He says, "It is unbecoming when truly in the presence of God to demand anything." You don't demand anything. You come confident in His graciousness, and confident in His mercy, and confident in His lovingkindness, but you still come asking. Seeking? Yes, but asking. So be reverent.

So when we come to the word of God, we need to understand the holiness of Him speaking to me. I'm not just reading rows of black print on white paper. I'm just not doing my quiet time so I can feel good about myself today. I am meeting with the living God. He has an agenda in this passage. He's willed to speak to me through this. This is not a light thing. God, help us. Help us not be so forgetful of that. I know it's so easy. I confess myself it's so easy to handle these holy things in a light way. Again, we cast ourselves on His grace and His mercy, but don't presume on them. "I'm so glad You're merciful and gracious, Lord. Help me be reverent. Incline my heart to fear Your Name. Unite my heart to fear Your Name."



The Psalmist says, “Look, I need You to work in me to make me fear You.” You see there even that humble reliance upon God. “I know as I come to Your word I’m thinking about other things.” Don’t you find at times you’re reading the Bible and all of a sudden you’re thinking about yesterday’s baseball game, or tomorrow’s agenda, or the grocery list? When that happens, wait a minute. “Lord, I’m sorry. I’ve forgotten what I was doing.” That sense of reverence says, “I need to be broken about that,” but then our confidence in His grace says, “Lord, thank You that You’re the one—how did I even remember that I was reading the Bible in the first place?” Maybe, like I said, you’re reading, but you’re not reading, but then you have a thought, “Hey, I’m not reading. I don’t know anything I just read.” Where did that thought come from? That’s the gracious Father calling you back. So again you just cast yourself on His amazing lovingkindness. “Lord, thank You. Thank You for calling me back.” So be reverent. That’s the first thing is to tremble at His word. The second thing is to:

B) Be Humble:

It really flows right out of that. When you realize that you’re in the presence of God before His word, it humbles pride. “You’re the one that holds my life breath in Your hand. Everything that I am depends upon You. I’m not going to be demanding.” And what it really means being humble, “I come to put myself under the word of God.” Now, this is very important because what we can do is we can come to the Bible in a way that says, “I am judging the Bible. I’m thinking about whether or not I agree with this.” Like an example of this would be for me—this plays out in all kinds of ways, and it plays out when we come to dilemmas like they were having here. Think about and remember the setting. They’re sitting there saying, “You say You’re going to die, but the Christ is to live forever. We’ve got a dilemma. We have a problem. We have these teachings where we know the Bible says this about the Christ, but now You’re saying this. It seems to be contradictory.” What do you do with that? You be humble. “Wait a minute, Lord. I don’t understand this.” You don’t just dismiss something because I don’t like it or I like the other part better.

When I was working through the issues related to the Doctrines of Grace as a seminarian, I had grown up in a Christian home and in a Baptist church, but I didn’t hear the Doctrines of Election, and predestination, and God’s sovereignty and grace. I had never heard those taught until right before I went to Seminary. In God’s providence, I went to a Seminary that taught those things, because I wanted to go to a Seminary that taught the Bible, and at that time I was looking, there weren’t any inerrancy-based Bible seminaries that I knew of.

So I ended up at Reformed Theological Seminary as a Southern Baptist kid, knowing that they believe in predestination, and that I'm not for that, but I respect these guys because I've read some books by J. I. Packer and R. C. Sproul, and I think these guys definitely know how to teach the Bible, so I want to learn from them. I spent my time studying, and basically not always arguing, but I found myself usually where in a discussion I was the minority position among my buddies. They were PCA guys. They were pretty patient with me, looking back on it, and for three and a half years I wrestled with the issue. It took me until after graduating Seminary before I finally became a convinced Calvinist. I was that hard-headed.

There was a watershed about half way through that I think really set the direction. I was reading Romans 5. We were studying through Romans in our class on the Pauline Epistles, and I studied Romans 5:12-21. We were working through that passage and I was reading through it at home, thinking, "You know, this is saying, when you read that passage, this is what it says. It says when Adam sinned, this is how you know that just trusting in Jesus saves you." This is basically the argument he's making. This is how you know that salvation is of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. "Let me explain," Paul says. In the same way that when Adam sinned, he condemned not only himself but every descendant of his, that is, his sin brought guilt, condemnation, and damnation to his whole race, and the Bible says we were born in sin and conceived in iniquity. We were brought forth in sin, right? We come into this world with hearts that are running away from God. Well, how did that happen? It happened because of Adam's sin, and Adam's sin is enough for God to condemn the whole of humanity.

I remember thinking, "I don't really like that. That doesn't seem very American to me." But now Paul's argument is that in the same way that one man's sin brought death, in the same way one man's act of righteousness brings life. If you want *this* to be true, you have to acknowledge *this* is true. If you want to have God credit Christ's righteousness through the cross and the resurrection, His perfect life transferred to your account, you must understand this is how God does His accounting. And as I was reading through that, I was wrestling with that, and I was in this dilemma. "Wait a minute. That just doesn't seem right. That doesn't seem fair," and this thought hit me. I think it was the Lord prompting this thought in my heart. "This doesn't seem fair," I said. That's not the thought He prompted. This is what He said, I think. "Who are you to say what is fair?" Who am I to say what is fair? That was like a laser going into my heart. "Wait a minute. I've been standing up here evaluating these things and seeing what I approve of." That's not the way you come to God.



You come to God under His word. You come to God, saying, “I know nothing. You must teach me. Teach me, oh Lord, Your ways, and help me to walk in them.” And when you do that, the wonder of it is He then teaches you, and you get on the other side of it a little bit, and you look back and you say, “Yes, yes, I see! How could I have ever doubted on the front end? Why was I so foolish and rash to question You? Of course it’s this way.” So be reverent and be humble. Put yourself under the word. Next, related to that again:

C) Be Teachable:

Coming right out of what I just said, being humble means you’ve got to be teachable. We come to learn, not to confirm what we already know. We ought to have a sense in which every time we come to the Bible, we come to be instructed and to be changed. Now, this means that those of us who have been Christians longer than some others, when another brother is sharing with us, maybe a new believer is sharing with us some passage that he’s been studying and is excited about, and you see that excitement in the new believer and you’re thinking it’s so neat, sometimes we can think as we’re more mature that it’s kind of cute to see this again, you know? “I remember when I was like that.”

What we should do is, wait a minute, this brother is speaking the word of God, and though he’s a baby in Christ, he’s wielding that which will endure forever, and as he speaks it, I need to come under the word of God. This means that any believer can bless any other believer as he brings the word of God, and we ought to always be eager and ready to come under the Bible. God has a way of teaching us through sometimes the most unlikely sources, because it humbles us even more when we remember it’s all of Him and all of His word, all of His grace. So be reverent, be humble, thirdly be teachable, and fourthly:

D) Be Attentive:

Give your full attention to the word of God. Seek to be undistracted. Work at it. Labor at thinking about it. Labor at focusing on it. I mean, a way to practically apply this would be you try to get a good night’s rest on Saturday night before Sunday. In Sunday morning Bible study and worship, you want to be attentive. You want to sleep well so that when you get up in the morning to spend time with God, as you’re reading the word, you’re not—I mean, He’s gracious and understanding, but we can make some changes, can’t we, to give Him more focus time, our best time, because this is the word of God. Be attentive. Give careful attention.

Think about it. Ask the questions just like we have today. “Wait, how does this fit together with what You said over here, Lord?” The Lord will bless that when you come to God and you say, “Lord, I don’t understand,” but you come humbly. “I don’t understand. It seems that You say this over here, and this is what’s happening.” Or, you know, “This is what’s over here,” or you say, “This is what You say about Yourself, but my circumstances, I don’t understand.” The Psalmists, read the Psalms. That’s what they’re saying all the time. “I don’t understand, Lord.” And the fact is God blesses them and He affirms and accepts that. He endorses that by putting those Psalms in His word. “This is the way you approach Me. You can come with honest questions. You can be troubled.” A lot of times these times are hard. “I don’t understand this. This seems unfair. This seems not right. Wait a minute, Lord. It doesn’t seem right to me, but I want to search it out. I want to stay in Your word. I want to see You. Show me.” So, be attentive.

E) Be Urgent:

Fifthly, there needs to be some urgency about us. Be urgent. Jesus says to the crowd, “...a little while longer...” in Verse 35:

John 12:35 ~ So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. ...

And then He says two more times, “...while you have the Light...”

John 12:35 ~ ...Walk while you have the Light, ...

John 12:36 ~ While you have the Light, believe in the Light,...

Three different times He’s emphasizing the shortness of time. “While you have the Light. While you have the Light. A little while longer.” And He says, “Listen, the reason you need to walk while you have the Light is because darkness will overtake you if you don’t walk,” that is, you need to be urgent. When you hear God’s word, you need to respond. When you understand what He’s saying, respond. This means we don’t treat it theoretically and like it’s something we’ll do later. This has particularly powerful application for the unbeliever, and ought to flavor our evangelism. When we’re sharing Christ with someone, and the Light is being revealed to them, and Christ is showing Himself to them, there’s an urgency that they should respond.

Now, God does it in His own way. We don't try to make them do a certain formula. You can't manipulate it but you want to have an urgency about this. "Listen, you need to trust Christ today, and if not today, soon, because if you reject Him, darkness is going to overtake you." The picture is the word *overtake* is to take down. Darkness comes up behind you and takes you down, and the picture is the Light is shining in your life here for a moment, Jesus says. "The Light is shining, but in a moment, if you don't respond to this, darkness is going to take you down." There's something about this. Light rejected is always followed by greater darkness. When you have the Light before you, walk in it. That's true for even us as Christians. We need to be people who when we hear the word, want to respond to it. So be reverent, be humble, be teachable, be attentive, be urgent, and the last one is:

F) Believe:

He says in Verse 36:

John 12:36 ~ While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

Come to the word reverently: This is the word of God. Come to the word humbly: I know nothing and I need to be taught. Come to the word teachable: I'm ready to be instructed, Lord. Come to the word attentive: I'm giving my full attention to you. And there's an urgency about this: Lord, I know this is important. It's urgent today. And now: Believe.

He says, "Believe while you have the light. Now, biblically, belief or faith is knowledge. It's really three things, and I want us to add a fourth today, but theologians say biblical faith is made up of three things: knowledge, assent, and trust. To believe something, you have to know the facts of the Gospel. Then you have to assent. You have to believe they're true. You can know them without assenting to them, can't you? But it's not just knowledge and assent. It's also trust, that is, you give yourself to the Gospel.

You know the Bible teaches that Jesus left the glory of heaven, came to the earth, lived a perfect life, God becomes Man, lives a perfect life for over 30 years, perfect righteousness, and then goes to the cross. There on the cross the Bible says He who knew no sin became sin for us. The sins of everyone who would ever believe are placed upon Jesus, and there He bears the wrath of God against our sins. There He experiences hell, as it were, on the cross, the agony of separation from the Father. When He breathes His last, the veil is torn, the way now is open to God, because

He's taken our sins as far as the east is from the west, and He's given us His righteousness. Now, that's the facts of the Gospel. Then He rose again from the dead to prove that all that He claimed to be and all that He claimed to do is true. So, with that now, you can know it, you assent to it, but you're not saved until you trust in it. You personally trust in Jesus Christ.

"Yes, I know these things about You. I assent that they're true, and now I give myself to You." That is salvation, and that's belief. So in the Christian life whenever we come to the word of God, we come with a goal of believing, at the end of it. "I'm coming to understand more about who You are and what Your claim is on my life, to gain a knowledge, and then I'm going to assent to it." But I'm not just going to know it and assent to it theoretically. You come to the word of God to be changed by it. "I'm going to trust You and surrender to You." And when you do that, the fourth thing I would add is that you obey. Faith, knowledge, assent, and trust in Christ results in obedience. This is this emphasis on walk. Walk while you have the Light. Believe. The idea is that when you truly believe, your life demonstrates it. Whenever we come to the word of God, when God shows us something, "I'm going to trust You."

It's like I was talking about. When I was struggling with that issue of if God's really sovereign over everyone who gets saved and He chooses unconditional election, He chooses those that He's going to save apart from anything in us, and the idea is we all deserve hell, and God's grace is that He saves any. "I mean, wait a minute. That doesn't sound fair to me." There's a part of me that still thinks that doesn't sound fair. I say a part of me because I still have sin in me. What do I have to do? "Wait a minute. I've got to put on what the Bible says about this." God says that everyone who sins deserves to die. Think about this. When the angels sinned, remember when Satan led a revolt in Heaven? Did God choose to save any of them? No. What has He done? He's reserved eternal fire for them. Is God right in doing that? Is that fair? Yes it is. If you want what's fair, that's fair.

So when man sinned, what would have been fair for God to do? To save no one, that would have been fair. If God had saved five, that would have been mercy. If God would have saved 100, that would have been incredible, overflowing grace. But when God saves a myriad of myriads, so many that we can't even count them, when God saves that many, that is glorious, overflowing grace. That's how we submit ourselves to the word. We take these things that are troubling, and say, "Wait a minute. It's not really a matter of whether I like it or not on the front end," because why would I trust what I like?

I mean, think about that for a moment. Why would I think that my spiritual tastes are that good? I'm a sinner. I grew up in America. We think so individualistically about self, self, self, self. "I need to be careful about that. Wait a minute. God spoke, and I'm just going to submit myself to His word and trust Him." And what I want to make sure of is I don't want to believe it because this person says it or this pastor says it. I want to believe it because the Bible teaches it, and when you come with that mindset, it doesn't matter whether I like it, Lord, but this is what I did for those three and a half years. I kept thinking, "Wait a minute..."

I've told before how Patti and I disagree on this. I think she became a Calvinist about three weeks into Seminary. She says it's more like six months. It felt like three weeks, because I was like saying, "You can't accept it this fast! You've got to make sure it's in the Bible." She's like, "It sounds right. It rings true." So three and a half years later, I agreed with her. But the reason is I studied the word, and so I would say to you the same thing. That issue just happened to come up. Any issue that you struggle with, the issue is go to the word, get under the word, stay in the word reverently, humbly, receive what God has to say, and then when you receive it, believe it. And listen, the beautiful thing is it enables you to trust Him with what you don't understand. There are a lot of things we're going to run into where we just don't understand what God is doing. How do you believe in those moments? He's saying, "This is who I am. This is what I've done," and I'm having trouble with it. Wait. Look at what you already know about Him. Look at the cross, and with what you're having trouble trusting Him in over here, in light of what You've shown me in the cross, how could I doubt You over here? I give myself to You. Teach me, Lord. That's the heart and the mindset that God will never fail to bless. You know, the word disciple means learner. Jesus calls you to be His disciple. He calls you to be a lifelong learner following Him and learning from Him. There's no better place to be than at the feet of Jesus, and we come to the feet of Jesus when we come to His word.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we stand in awe of You. Lord, You are holy. You are exalted above all the earth. Your righteousness is above the heavens. You are eternal. You're infinite in every way, and we're so small, and we're so insignificant, and we are so sinful, and yet Wonder of wonders, You have chosen to stoop down to speak to us, to commune with us by speaking to us and revealing the glory of who You are, and giving us the ability by Your Spirit to understand, to commune with You, and You made all this happen through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. We stand in awe and wonder.



Father, help us to surrender to You. Help those in this room who have not yet repented and believed, who have not yet truly been saved, to give themselves to You today, to turn from their sin, living for themselves, and to realize that You are their hope. You are truly their hearts' desire. And Father, for everyone who belongs to You, may we continue to seek You. May You as Your word tells us, "Seek My face," may our hearts say to You, "Thy face, oh Lord, I will seek," and may we seek You more and more fervently every day until You take us home. Father, we pray that You would be glorified, and we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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