

THE GLORY THAT COMES FROM MAN AND THE GLORY THAT COMES FROM GOD AND HOW EACH TOTALLY DESTROYS THE OTHER

John 12:42-50 - "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. [44] And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. [45] And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. [46] I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. [47] If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. [48] The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. [49] For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. [50] And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

Today's text is designed to help us see the **big picture** when it comes to comparing **belief** and **unbelief**. The danger of being deceived and missing the **urgency** of following Christ Jesus is exposed. Whatever else we do or do not do well in this earthly life we must **believe** - **literally** "**believe into** - **Jesus Christ**."

The Apostle John takes **21 chapters**, measured in our New Testaments, analyzing what it means to **believe** in Christ Jesus. It's very hard to identify even our own genuine beliefs honestly and accurately. Horses, houses, cars and cats - all of these things can be **seen** and **touched**. **Beliefs** are different. You can't weigh them or smell them. They are such **inward** things. And everyone has his or her own. You are free to create them as you will. They seem to be able to come and go and **morph** over time. There are **true** beliefs and there are **false** beliefs. Believing something doesn't **make** it become true. And denying something doesn't **make** it untrue. There's also **uncertainty** about some things. And there are **opinions** as well. It's a tricky combination.

Groucho Marx used to famously say, "**There, those are my life's convictions. And if you don't like them, well, I have others.**" But John would remind us all there is no such **flexibility** believing into Christ Jesus. The **facts** about Jesus Christ and His divine saving work can't be shrunk down to mere **opinion**. The **facts** about Jesus Christ and His saving death and resurrection **collide** with the opinions of the masses. Belief in Christ must **push through** a lot of opposition in this age. So we need to know what's in John's heart and head as he ruminates on the issue of authentic belief. Apparently it's not as easy as we might think. And our destiny depends on it.

1) **BELIEF IN JESUS IS HARD BECAUSE WE LOVE BEING ACCEPTED BY VISIBLE PEOPLE MORE THAN WE LOVE BEING FAITHFUL TO AN UNSEEN LORD**

John 12:42-43 - "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

The careful reader will instantly realize this love of acceptability was a **core belief problem** in would-be disciples. Jesus' repetition of this same warning means He saw it as an **ongoing problem** that needed constant attention and resistance - John 5:42-44 - "But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. [43] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. [44] How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?"

Our lives are only capable of having **one dominant passion**. We can entertain all sorts of **hobbies**. We can hold together multiple **activities**. We can enjoy endless **occupations** and **pursuits**. But we can only have **one dominant passion**. There can only be **one controlling desire** at the center of our inward universe.

This is what Jesus was drilling down into when He said no one could "**serve two masters**." Something has to steer the entire life and that driving center must be **one**. It cannot be **two**. You were created for a **single** center. Not a **plural**.

And now, in our text, Jesus gets specific. He identifies the "**other master**" usurping God's place and making belief in Christ impossible. If the **controlling** desire of your life is to be accepted and loved by other people - if you just have to **fit in** - you

can't follow Jesus Christ.

Today's text gives an outward manifestation of this inward betrayal. There were some rulers (Pharisees) who said they "**believed**" in Jesus. But they knew they were surrounded by others who **didn't** believe. And these believing Pharisees didn't want to be shunned by those who had the power to embarrass and reject them. The text says they believed in Jesus - sort of - "**...but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it...**"(42).

That phrase says a great deal. What you **fear** the most is the ultimate proof of what **controls** your life. These Pharisees' fear reveals their ultimate passion. It says they were **more** afraid of the displeasure of the other Pharisees than they feared **grieving God**. Other **people** prompted their response more than **God** prompted their response.

Now, if their lives had been properly oriented toward God - if they were serving the right master - they would have realized they had something more important to fear than the Pharisees. They would have been kept safe and clean by the fear Jesus described in **Matthew 10:32-33** - "**So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, [33] but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.**"

That's a fear worth steering your life by. But they ignored this fear entirely because their lives were controlled by **visible people** rather than an **invisible God**.

The human situations that reveal this problem are all over the place. Picture a man wanting to follow Jesus on a certain level of his life but is in a relationship with a non-Christian woman. And he can't figure out why his faith is nothing more than a thin squirt of paint over the surface of his same-old life. He knows he **ought** to break off that relationship but can't. He values the love of that one woman **more** than he values the smile of God. Note it well. He fears losing **her** more than losing **Him**.

Imagine the scores of Christians who find themselves dwindling into compromising all sorts of values of purity and separation from the world because they feel most happy when they are with a certain set of friends who **take them** into those compromises and they don't want to be **without** those friends on a Friday night. They fear losing the **closeness** of those friends more than they miss being genuinely **close** with the Spirit of God.

Here's a man addicted to pornography on the internet. There he sits with his lonely sex. He probably believes he can't quit. But then he hears his wife's feet coming up the stairs to the office. Instantly, what he felt he could never have strength to do, he does with ease. He shuts the computer down - but for all the wrong reasons. He suddenly fears the loss of face with his wife. And he fears that more than he fears grieving the Holy Spirit who was watching him all along.

Get a picture the hundreds of people who sit in church pretty regularly knowing full-well they are being nudged into repentance by a gracious Lord who is calling them **one more time** to kneel at some altar and, in front of the whole church, find the peace and direction of a spiritual fresh start. But most of the time they don't obey. And they don't obey because everyone will know their lives need re-ordering and they can't bear bringing their lives into the light because they're on the board or they sing in the choir or teach that class. And they fear **losing their good image more** than they fear missing **God's restoring grace**.

This, by the way, is the proper theology behind frequent **public** responses of dedication and repentance in the body of Christ. Altar times aren't just emotionalism. **Public** responses to the Spirit of God **train us** not just to **love God**, but to love Him **more** than our own pride. These precious times teach us to **separate ourselves** from the masses.

There another important point here:

2) **IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO REGRET FALLING INTO SIN. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE FALL INTO SIN**

John 12:42-43 - "**Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.**"

We're watching our wise Lord trace sinful actions back to their **source**. It is so easy to repeat sin, feeling only the shame of failure without allowing the Word and Spirit to do a spiritual **crime scene investigation**.

I lived my Christian life far too long before learning there are **root sins** that spawn multiple forms of disobedience and cowardice. And the root sins are **few**, not **many**. It is the essence of wisdom to shut down spiritual failure on two or three battle fronts rather than twenty.

The **love of wealth** is a root sin - **1 Timothy 6:9-10** - "**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. [10] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**"

In our text today the **love of fitting in with others** is another very powerful root sin. Jesus is graciously revealing **where our sins come from**. This is the **fountain** from which the river of other sins flows. The fear of **not being accepted - not fitting in** - is a desire so strong it frequently overrides what we already know following Jesus would demand. Don't just feel guilty and condemned when you fail the Lord. **Trace out the "why."** Look for root sins and focus your prayer and diligence in the right spot.

3) **FAITH IS STRENGTHENED AND JOY IS DEEPENED WHEN WE STAKE OUR FAITH DEEPLY AND PUBLICLY, LOSING EVERYTHING ELSE FOR THE HONOR AND GLORY OF CHRIST**

John 12:42-43 - "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees **they did not confess it**, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; [43] for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

For some reason my mind instantly flashed back to Paul's magnificent words in **Romans 10:10** - "**For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**"

Seriously, have you never wondered why Paul felt the divinely inspired compulsion to link **inward belief** ("with the heart") with **outward confession** ("with the mouth one confesses and is saved")? No, this has nothing whatsoever to do with "word faith" theology or making some kind of "positive confession."

What Paul wants to pronounce is the importance of taking something **inward and invisible** and reinforcing it by making it **visible and public**. Visible confession holds **other masters** at bay. We give ourselves something to live up to when we make our profession of Christ visible. Suddenly we are **invested** in our faith. **We force commitment to a visible standard**. And yes, the Apostle Paul actually says there is something "saving" in this kind of publicly invested, risk everything else faith - **Romans 10:10** - "**For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**"

I take Paul to be saying a **privately held faith is doomed**. Other masters will gain control.

4) **THIS WORLD NOT ONLY REJECTS CHRIST, IT REJECTS THOSE WHO COMMIT TO CHRIST**

John 12:42 - "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees **they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue....**"

Very quickly, this is ever the nature of this present world. All is tolerated except exclusive devotion to Christ Jesus as Lord. This world doesn't mind you having your religion. But it will not tolerate being put in **second place**. The world-centered spirit of this present age **demand absolute loyalty**. John means for us to see the high price these Jesus-admiring Pharisees were unwilling to pay.

So given all of this, why should anyone confess and visibly separate himself or herself by a bold Christ-commitment?

5) **LIFE LIVED DEVOTED TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND ADMIRATION OF THE CROWD IS A LIFE LIVED IN THE DARK**

John 12:44-46 - "And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. [45] And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. [46] I have come into the world as light, so that **whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.**"

I am drawn to the way John records Jesus **"cried out"**(44). This is not merely some clinical recitation on Jesus' part. Jesus isn't merely **conversing** here. His volume would have made us all uncomfortable if we were in some social gathering. It would have struck us as inappropriate. This is Jesus **yelling**.

Why? Why does Jesus yell? Because He's about to tell us He is Father God's solution to deep human lostness - **darkness**, He's going to call it. And He yells because of the deep frustration in His soul, knowing we don't **see** people as really walking in darkness apart from His redeeming work.

Remember, He's warning His true followers **not** to receive their life's influence and direction from the visible crowd around them. This will make authentic belief impossible. But He knows we're all **inclined** to crave the acceptance and influence of the crowd **more** than we will give weight to the glory and approval of God. And we **serve the wrong master so easily because we don't believe such a life will be a tragically dark life**. We just don't see things as they really are.

That leads to our next point:

6) **THERE IS A FUTURE JUDGMENT COMING AND WE WILL EXPERIENCE A FORCED REMEMBRANCE OF THE WILL OF JESUS WE FAILED TO TREASURE**

John 12:47-48 - **"If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. [48] The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."**

I think about this quite a bit. It is so easy to **tune out** our speaking Lord with what we feel are more urgent matters. I don't have to **reject** Jesus to place His words second to my desire for human acceptance and recognition.

Jesus is addressing my tendency to **lose count** of the number of times I didn't fully listen to Him. And, says Jesus, on the **"last day"** it will no longer be possible to ignore that tallied number. All of the **"words"** will come flooding back. All of the ones I passed over lightly. All of the ones I pretended not to hear.

I know we aren't saved by our own works of righteousness. I know we have to be careful how we read and preach this. But I also know there will be a reason Jesus will have to **"wipe away every tear from our eyes."** We will somehow feel the weight of missed opportunity - that can never be reclaimed - of that joyful listening to and prioritizing the words of our speaking Savior.

7) **IN JESUS' RECORDED WORDS WE HAVE THE VERY SPEECH OF OUR CREATOR GOD**

John 12:49-50 - **"For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. [50] And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."**

We can have absolute trust in the words of Jesus we studied today. We can know it's not just a matter of opinion that the great danger to our souls is the love of fitting in with visible people more than pleasing an invisible God. We can go out this week and re-chisel the shape of our crowd-pleasing lives in confidence that we're doing the wisest thing in the world when we seek Christ's glory first of all.

Jesus tells us **His** words are **God's** words. That means His words are **life-giving** in a way Oprah's or Mohamad's or the Pope's never can be. Don't hear Jesus' words as more moral advice for your crowded life. Hear Jesus as a way out of darkness. That's why He came and that's why He speaks.