

Unbelievable Unbelief

John 12:37-50

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In John 1:11, just to introduce us tonight, John tells us, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The first “own” there is His own things. It’s referring to creation. The second word “own,” “...his own received him not,” refers to the nation of Israel, the Jewish people. He came into the creation that He had created, but His own people, the nation of Israel did not believe Him or receive Him but rejected Him. Again, the next verse (John 1:12), “But as many as received him, to them gave he power,” the right or the authority, “to become the sons of God,” children of God, “even to them that believe on his name.” The gospel of John from the beginning of his gospel has sounded the theme of national or Jewish unbelief and Jewish belief. The gospel is really about those two subjects—belief and unbelief, believing in Jesus or rejecting Jesus. Yes, it presents Jesus as the Son of God, but it runs along that theme of belief or unbelief, especially these first 12 chapters deal with His presentation to Israel as the Son of God, and we see the national rejection or unbelief of Jesus as their Messiah.

We come to the close of Christ’s public ministry, and John, again, speaks of the Jewish unbelief and belief. He actually gives us a statement about how unbelievable is their unbelief, so I’ve titled my message tonight: Unbelievable Unbelief. The nation of Israel, in spite of all the miracles that He performed, would not believe in Him. One of the great mysteries is that Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not. How could the Jewish nation of Israel, with all their prophetic Scriptures, not know who He was and believe in Him? As we go into chapters 13-17, we’ll move into the private ministry where Jesus, in just a few hours, spent the evening with His disciples teaching them important lessons that He wanted them to know.

In our text tonight, verses 37-50, there are two main sections, clear as can be. Let’s take the first one, verses 37-43, in which John has an explanation for the Jewish unbelief. He’s basically doing this, he’s explaining the Jewish unbelief and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and he does so by focusing on the prophet of Isaiah and his words about this very subject. Let’s read verses 37-43. “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. 41 These things,” notice it, “said Esaias, when he saw his glory,” he’s referring to Isaiah the prophet saw Jesus, “and spake of him. 42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Looking at the subject of unbelief, John has three suggestions to offer. This is real simple, real clear, but we’re going to be dealing with some profound theology and Scriptures in these

verses. John is looking at the subject of unbelief, and he has three suggestions. You might want to write them down. First, John said the Jewish unbelief was illogical and contrary to normal expectation. That's in verse 37. He says, "Look, the unbelief of the Jewish nation doesn't make any sense. It's illogical and it defies expectation." Go back with me to verse 37. He says, "But," so there's a contrast. Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. He's been at the feast there in the Passover speaking and teaching. He says, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they," the Jewish nation of Israel, "believed not on him." Jesus had performed the miracles.

Now, we know that John's gospel is laid out with seven miracles known as signs. In John 20, John says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus...that ye might believe that Jesus is the...Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." He says, "He did many miracles, but I chose these seven so that you might come to the knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God," and then that theme, "that believing ye might have life through his name."

I want you to notice in verse 37 that "...they believed not on him." This is clearly indicating that it was their willful deliberate choice. They chose, in spite of the overwhelming evidence of the miraculous signs Jesus performed, of their own will and volition, not to believe on Jesus. No one can be blamed for their unbelief except for their own willful disobedience to God. The Jews' unbelief was unbelievable. Why? The answer is in verse 37, because "...he had done so many miracles." I sometimes just marvel to think, They actually saw, with their own eyes, Jesus perform every one of these miracles and still chose not to believe.

Let me give you just a quick survey of the seven miracles. I know if you've been here on Wednesday night you're familiar with them, but let me give them to you in one setting. In John 2 was the first of the seven signs. That was where Jesus, remember, changed the water into wine. We all know about the miracle at the wedding at Cana, when Jesus actually took the water and turned it to wine. They took it to the host, and he said, "This is amazing! Most people bring out the good wine at the beginning and the real bad stuff at the end, but you've brought out the best for the last," which is what God does, by the way, the last is the best when you walk with the Lord. The Christian life only gets better and better and better. But that miracle of turning water into wine means that He is Master of quality.

The second miracle was in John 4, where He healed the nobleman's son, and He's Master of distance. He didn't have to go to the boy, He just spoke and the boy was healed. He's not bound by distance. The third of the seven signs was in John 5, the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus found this lame man who had been lame for 38 years and healed him. He rolled up his mat and walked away. What a great miracle that was. He's Master of time. No matter how long you've been afflicted, He can come and deliver you.

The fourth was John 6, feeding of the five thousand, where He multiplied the bread and the fish, so He's Master of quantity. He provided more than they could eat. The fifth was in John 6, the walking on water. He's Master of natural laws. He wasn't walking on hot coals, He was walking on water. You see these kind of mystic religions walk on coals, and I think, Big deal, try walking

across the lake of Galilee and see how you do. Jesus was Master of earth and sky. The sixth was in John 9, the healing of the man born blind. He's Master of misfortune. The disciples said, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day," and He healed this man of his blindness.

Recently, we studied in John 11 the seventh sign which was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. He's Master over death. As Jesus stood at the grave of Lazarus, He said, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead," for four days, "came forth," out of that grave. Think about all these miracles Jesus performed. Now, this is only seven out of about 35-40 miracles that Jesus performed. In the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there were a multitude of miracles. John says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus...which are not written in this book," so they saw this, and it's just unbelievable to think that these Jews would see this power of God manifested but still would harden their hearts and would not believe. In spite of all the signs, verse 37 says, "...yet they believed not." I pointed out as I started this section that "they" indicates that they willfully, deliberately made their own choice not to believe in spite of all the evidence.

The bottom line today is that there's plenty of evidence to believe in God, there's plenty of evidence to believe in Jesus Christ, but people, in spite of the evidence, choose not to believe. It's not hard to believe in God. Some people say they choose to believe in evolution, that evolution explains where we came from and why we're here and what's going on. The truth is evolution doesn't really answer any of those questions. The Bible says in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," so all things came from God. Either you believe in an eternal transcendent all-powerful God who created all things...and science, by the way, still has not been able to figure out where life comes from.

You know, in a few weeks we're actually going to do kind of a weekly series on Sunday night showing some really amazing films on science and the Bible. The first one we're going to show is about a two-hour movie on Sunday night that deals with the historicity of the book of Genesis. Is Genesis a historic account of God's creation and the first eleven chapters...a lot of evidence for the existence of God and that the book of Genesis is history. So, you don't want to miss that Sunday night series when we launch that in a few weeks. I think of evolution, what a lie that is and how it's deceived people, but the truth is they just choose not to believe. It's kind of like, "Don't confuse me with the evidence, my mind is made up."

The evidence is overwhelming that God exists. All you have to do is look at a newborn baby. Have you ever done that? Looked at a brand newborn baby and thought, How can anyone say there's no God? What a miracle a child is and to think of the creation, the macrocosm of God's universe and in the microcosm of God's universe, the DNA molecules and all the information that's in that little DNA, and all the information that's in a cell, and the wisdom of God, and the power of God, the majesty of God, the design, the balance that is in the creation put there by the Creator? But men willfully, deliberately choose not to believe. John Philips points out that it

was a deliberately fostered unbelief. John basically says in verse 37 that this unbelief was actually something that was unbelievable. It was contrary to logic and expectation of the Jewish people.

Secondly, verse 38, John's suggestion was that their unbelief was predicted or divinely foretold. This gets real fascinating. Notice verse 38. He says, "That," so he says, "...yet they believed not on him: That," the idea is in order that, "the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" John suggests that their unbelief was actually something God prophesied in the Old Testament, God knew about, and it didn't get God by surprise. God's not in heaven going, "Man, that's really a bummer. I sent My Son, and He did those miracles, and they still didn't believe, and it messes up everything." No. God sits on the throne and rules from heaven, and God is in absolute control.

The Scripture that's quoted here is Isaiah 53:1. It says, "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" This quote contains two rhetorical questions, you see the question marks in the text, and those rhetorical questions expect a "No" answer, that no one believed our report. He's using this prophecy found in Isaiah...which Isaiah 53 is one of the most marvelous chapters on Jesus the Messiah, sent to Israel, but that they rejected Him and crucified Him. If you're ever sharing the gospel with a Jew, one of the best places to turn in your Bible is Isaiah 53. It so clearly describes Messiah, that He was rejected and despised, He was smitten of God, and that by His stripes, we are healed. It describes in graphic detail the crucifixion of the Jewish Messiah.

The report was sent out, which were the words, and "the arm of the Lord," speaks of His works. The Word of the Lord came, and they rejected that; the works of the Lord, the miracles, the power and signs and wonders of the Lord, the arm in the Bible always speaks of strength or power, yet they rejected that as well. So, those two rhetorical questions anticipate that God prophetically said that He would send the Messiah but that He would be rejected, they wouldn't believe the report, and they wouldn't believe the miracles—the arm of the Lord was revealed to them. It's the sovereignty of God using even the unbelief of man. Someone said it like this, "God's purposes are not frustrated by the unbelief and opposition of evil men." That's something you might want to write down and hang onto at this very difficult time in our nation. No matter what men do, no matter what men say, no matter how people reject Christ and oppose Him and His Word, God still sits on the throne. Amen?

I say that knowing it's very difficult. If I watch the news too much, I get depressed. I've got to turn the tv off and get in my Bible and get blessed by looking at Jesus. Remember, He's on the throne, and we need to remind ourselves that no matter what wicked men do, no matter what they devise to bring to pass, they cannot thwart or overthrow or hinder God's purpose and God's plan. Amen? God's purposes will be fulfilled, so even the rejection of Jesus is leading to the cross to fulfill the purpose of God to bring redemption to a lost world. These opposition and wicked and unbelieving men actually help to accomplish God's purposes rather than thwart or frustrate God's purpose.

Write down Romans 9, 10, and 11. I really urge you to do this. I know I kind of give you homework once in a while, and I kind of highly doubt anyone ever does it. From time to time people go, "You know, I went home and read that, Pastor John, and it was really good," so I'll give you a little star for your Bible after church. You really ought to read Romans 9, 10, and 11 because it will throw amazing light on our passage. In those three chapters, you have Paul the apostle theologically dealing with the subject of Israel and God's plan of redemption. It goes like this: Romans 9 is Israel's election, God chose the nation of Israel; Romans 10 is Israel's rejection, they rejected Christ and, like the natural olive branch, were broken off; Romans 11 is Israel's restoration. Israel's rejection and temporary blindness is only partial, not complete, there's always a remnant, and it's only temporary. We haven't seen the church replace Israel, the church is a separate plan and program of God, God still has a purpose and a plan for the nation Israel.

There's a future for the nation of Israel. It's all prophetically laid out and planned out. They will be restored. They will see the Messiah coming in the Second Coming. Romans 9, God elected them; Romans 10, they rejected Christ; Romans 11, God restores them. It fits right in with this verse, "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Why did they reject Your Word and Your marvelous works? So it led to the cross which meant redemption for the whole world.

Here's the third statement John makes, verses 39-40, their unbelief was the direct result of God's retribution. Actually, everything we read in verses 37-43 is theologically explained in Romans 9, 10, and 11. What Paul** (**John?) says in verses 39-40, is that their unbelief was the direct result of God's retribution or judgment upon them. Let's look at it in verses 39-40. "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again," John makes it clear that now they could not believe. You might want to write this down. First, they would not believe; secondly, they could not believe. I can't tell you how important that is to get, and to get it in that order—first, they would not believe, and as a result, judicially, they could not believe. Light rejected brings darkness, which is the sense of the judgment of God. Therefore, they could not now believe because, he gives us the rationale, again, Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 6:10, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

If you read the Isaiah 6:10 passage, you might be a little confused because it's worded differently and that is probably because John is quoting from what is called the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek; and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament authors could actually rephrase some of the quotations—they're not verbatim or exact, but they're still writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes New Testament quotes are taken from what were known as the Septuagint, which was a Greek translation of the Old Testament written during the intertestamental period. He's quoting Isaiah 6:10, and he quotes, "...who hath believed our report?" first but then says, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Here's the challenge of this verse; and, as I've read it with you right now, maybe some of you already are thinking, What's the deal here? God blinding these people? That's why I emphasize first they would not believe and then could not believe—because God allowed them to continue in their rejection and unbelief, they become blind. In a sense, their eyes and their hearts atrophied and wouldn't function anymore. It's not that God blinds people sovereignly, intentionally, and arbitrarily and hardens their heart. That's contrary to the nature of God. The Bible says God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. One of the challenges that we do have is on the free will of man that's taught in the Bible, that man is a free moral agent, and the sovereignty of God. Have you ever wondered why some people believe in God and some don't? Maybe you're the only one saved in your pagan family. Maybe all your relatives are atheists or unbelievers, and God reached down in His grace and mercy and saved you by His grace. It's marvelous to think that God would save any of us.

I was raised in a Christian home and taught the Bible as a young boy, so it didn't seem that odd that I would become a Christian. But it amazes me when people were raised in non-Christian homes, and many times an atheistic, God-rejecting kind of a home; yet God, in His marvelous grace and mercy, reaches down and saves them. Didn't Jesus say, "You have not chosen Me, but I've chosen you." My mother grew up in a non-Christian home, and she got saved at 16. When she was about to turn 17 she got on a bus in Wisconsin and rode all the way across the United States. She left her family and went to Bible college in Los Angeles. She met my dad, and the rest is history. It's just so cool to think that God would reach down in His grace and save a young girl in a non-Christian home.

The unbelief isn't God blinding or hardening them. I would say it like this: God's hardening of hearts is a judicial hardening of those who have already turned from the light to walk in darkness. In other words, they first would not believe; then, as the consequence and result, they could not believe. In a sovereign sense, God allowed them to become hardened in their hearts and blind in their eyes. On a very scholarly commentary done by Leon Morris, he says this about this subject, "When John quotes, 'He hath blinded their eyes...' he does not mean that the blinding takes place without the will, or against the will of these people, so with the hardening of their hearts, these men chose evil. It was their own deliberate choice, their own fault. Make no mistake about that throughout the gospel of John, he has insisted upon the seriousness of the decision forced upon the Jews by the presence of Jesus on their responsibility and on their guilt. He is not now removing all that." All through the gospel of John Jesus has been placing the responsibility of belief or unbelief right upon the individual. He isn't all of the sudden, when we get to the end of John 12 here saying, "No, it wasn't their fault. God just blinded their minds and hardened their hearts," so it's speaking of the consequence of their own hardened hearts.

Let me give you an illustration. In the book of Exodus 9, when the children of Israel were going to go out as slaves from Egypt and God was bringing the plagues upon Egypt, the Bible actually says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. He was a very hard man, and he hardened his heart against God in letting the people of Israel go. Then, the Bible says, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." Now, when it says, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," it means that Pharaoh

hardened his heart. When it says there in Hebrew that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it means that God allowed Pharaoh's heart to be hardened by taking His hands off of him and letting him go his own direction. You know, sometimes one of the greatest judgments that God could ever bring on an individual or on a nation is to let them go their own way. That's the greatest judgment God could bring. As you want to follow your lusts and your evil desires, and God takes His hands off you and allows you to go that direction, and then you reap the consequences of your own rebellion and unbelief and disobedience, don't blame God. If light came to you and you rejected that light, don't blame God that you're living in darkness.

It's explained also in Romans 1, specifically in verse 24, where Paul describes the down degenerating trend of man where it says, "...God also gave them up to...the lusts of their own hearts," and the degeneration of man ends in homosexuality. It says, "God gave them up," that's the same concept. God released them. "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things," that they wanted to against their own bodies. A reprobate mind literally means a mind that doesn't work. It doesn't discern right from wrong or truth from error. It's a mind that doesn't work. The etymology of the word "reprobate" literally means broken. It doesn't work. A reprobate clock is broken. It doesn't work. A reprobate mind doesn't work right. If you want your mind to work right, you need to have it influenced and educated by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. In a sense, it's Christians illuminated by God's Word that are sane and thinking straight with minds that are working properly. So, they're given over by God. God doesn't do it to them, God just releases them to their own sinful behavior and ways. When you read that verse, don't misinterpret that as though God wickedly and arbitrarily could blind them. God would never do that. Men are free to believe or not to believe; but, again, it's a picture of spiritual atrophy. If you don't see with your eyes, they'll go blind. If you don't respond with your heart, it will become hardened.

I want you to note in verse 40, it mentions there, "blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart... and be converted." It's interesting that if you turn those around, you can learn the steps that are needed and necessary for true conversion. Let me show you what I mean. Their blinded eyes speak of the fact that to be converted we must have our eyes opened to see divine reality. If you were unregenerated, and the Holy Spirit came to convict and show you your sin and your need of Jesus, that is the marvelous grace of God. You're running from God, you're pursuing your sinful passions, you're living in darkness, and then all of the sudden life seems empty. All of the sudden you're unsatisfied, and all of the sudden you just start thinking about God and maybe somebody gives you a Bible. You start reading the Bible. As you're reading the Bible, all of the sudden it starts to make sense. You begin to see your need of God, and maybe you start to cry and turn to God and talk to God. You're looking around like, "What's going on? What's happening to me? This is so freaky!" I just described my conversion.

I wasn't seeking God. I wasn't a senior in high school and go, "Man, do you know what I think I really want to do? I want to become a Jesus freak. I want to become a Christian. I want to stop going to the parties, and I want to go to a Bible study. That's what I want to do." No. That isn't what I was doing. All of the sudden my eyes just started to open up. It was like God gave me a new set of eyes, and the Bible just began to make sense to me. I began to see my need

for God, and I was so dissatisfied and empty with the life that I was living. So, God has to open your eyes to divine reality.

Secondly, it says, "...and hardened their heart." To be truly converted you must be softened and broken to understand the things of God. Your heart must become softened and broken. God doesn't despise a broken spirit or a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. True repentance starts when you begin to see and feel the weight of your sin, and you're sorry before God.

Thirdly, I love it, it says, verse 40, "...and be converted, and I should heal them," notice he says, 'heal them.' Isn't that great? God opens our eyes, softens our hearts, and He converts us and heals us. That's salvation. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," creation. King Jimmy says, "creature." I don't think we want to become creatures, we want to become creations. Amen? We're new creations in Christ, and then it says, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." When you become a Christian, you're brand new. You start life all over again. It's a marvelous work. He converts us and heals us.

I want you to note, verses 41-43, the kind of wrap up of this first section, he again says, "These things said Esaias, when," he gives us the context here, "he saw his glory, and spake of him. 42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue," or excommunicated, which is what that means. Why did they not want to confess Him? Sadly, verse 43, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

I want you to get your pencil ready. I'm going to give you some important insight into verse 41, "These things said Esaias, when he saw," notice this, "his glory, and spake of him." Whose glory, and who is he speaking of? Jesus. Isaiah saw Jesus, you got that? It's Isaiah 6:1, "...I saw also the Lord," all capital letters. You say, "What's the big deal?" LORD, all capital letters, is Yahweh or Jehovah. When you have a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door and you tell them Jesus is Jehovah, you turn to Isaiah 6:1 then you turn to John 12:41, and it's a powerful testimony that Jesus is Jehovah. It's saying here that he saw Him. Isaiah says he saw the Lord, "...high and lifted up, and his," glory, "filled the temple." And the angels were crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD," Jehovah, Yahweh, "of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Who did Isaiah see sitting on that throne? Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus is Jehovah God. I don't know about you but that gets me pretty excited. Some of you are looking at me like, "Big deal." Aren't you stoked on that? Jesus Christ is called "LORD" there, and it's very, very clear and powerful as you put those two verses together—Jesus Christ is LORD. It's so amazing to think about.

Then, in verse 42, "Nevertheless," so here's the contrast. There was a silent majority, "among the chief rulers" and many of the Pharisees, "also many believed on him." Now, the challenge here is: was it saving faith? Did they just kind of believe on Him or did they really commit to trust Him; and, were they really saved because there's a problem, "...they did not confess him,

lest they should be put out of the synagogue,” and the reason was, sadly, verse 43, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” The question is: Is it possible to be saved and yet silent? Are there Christians who are of Christ of the secret order, undercover Christians? That’s a good question.

Remember when Peter sat by the fire in Caiaphas’ courtyard and a little maid girl said, “Surely you’re one of them, your Galilean accent gives you away.” He had a Galilean twang in his speech. “Ya’ll from Galilee, ain’t ya?” Peter said, “No. I don’t even know the man,” and began to curse and swear. “Peter! You know Jesus. What are you doing?” Then he heard the rooster crow and remembered Jesus’ words that he would deny Him, and he ran out into the night and wept bitter tears. His heart was broken. He knew Jesus, he loved Jesus, but he denied Jesus. Jesus, thankfully, forgave Peter. He restored him and then recommissioned him back into service. It is interesting, Jesus said, “If you are ashamed of Me in this wicked and sinful and adulterous generation, I will be ashamed of you before My Father and the holy angels.” Ashamed of Jesus who gave His life to die on the cross for our sins? We’ve got to question how deep or real is your commitment.

Now, I know as a young Christian there were times when I got saved (I just kind of described my coming to Christ), but when I finally came to Christ, I still had all my unsaved sin party buddies. I hung around them a little bit and finally just kind of broke away. I remember times that I would see my old friends, “Hey, John, what have you been doing?” I’ve been reading the Bible, I’ve been praying, I’ve been going to church, I’m not doing drugs, not going to parties anymore. “What have you been doing?” They want to hear about the parties and all. I’m thinking, Well, I’m not going to say I’ve been going to church! Uh, been reading my Bible? They’re going to think I’m crazy. I confess that as a baby Christian I choked a couple times. I just said, “Oh, nothing.” I got saved this summer! God’s doing an amazing work in my life! “What have you been doing, lately, John?” “Oh, nothing.”

Like Peter, I remember one day (I won’t go into detail describing it) I was working at home in my garage and a friend came over. I choked and didn’t share with them. They left and I just sat down and wept. I said, “Lord, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry that I wasn’t courageous enough or bold enough to tell this friend of mine what I’m doing.” I said, “Lord,” this actually happened, “if you give me another opportunity, and You give me the strength, I’ll share with them my testimony.” About 15 minutes later the guy came back. He actually pulled back up in front of my house and came back. It’s like, “Okay, here it goes,” you know, and I was able, with the Lord’s strength, He helped me and I said, “You know, I told you a few minutes ago I was doing nothing. Sit down. Let me tell you what God has done in my life this summer and what’s happened to me, how I’ve come to Christ.” He just sat there kind of blown away as I shared my testimony.

How many times, like Peter, we choke up and follow afar off and we deny the Lord and stumble and fall? It’s sad that this says, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,” this is the fear of man. In 2 Timothy 2:12, it says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” Another great commentator on this verse, Charles R. Erdman said, “No one can ever hope to

see the truth who is not willing to accept the consequences which its acceptance may bring." I love that. No one may ever hope to see the truth who is not willing to accept the consequences which the acceptance may bring. In other words, "Lord, if they laugh at me, if they reject me, if they call me names, it doesn't matter. I've received the truth, and I want to follow You." If you're not willing to continue to believe on Him no matter what happens, it's important that you do because God wants to give you more truth.

As I pointed out, it says, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," so the fear of man is what kept them back. I love the idea that Nicodemus, who was a leader of the Jewish people, was a true follower of Jesus; and Joseph of Arimathea as well was a member of the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jewish nation, and he was a believer in Jesus. He came out publicly and gave Jesus his sepulcher to be buried in. In Acts 6:7, it says, "...a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Verses 44-50 is the last section, and we won't tarry on it, but it's really important that you see it in its context. We have in these verses the exhortation Jesus gave in light of unbelief. In verses 44-50, he's talking about the consequences of unbelief. This is a cool section in John where he actually is summarizing. From verses 44-50, Jesus is speaking, and He's summarizing His message of His public ministry about belief, unbelief, and the consequences of unbelief. Verse 44, "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." This is Jesus summarizing everything He's preached up to this point in John's gospel. Verse 45, "And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

I want you to note here the summation of Jesus' message. First, in verse 44, He said, "He that believeth on me," is to believe in God the Father; to reject Him is to reject God the Father. Now, I've mentioned it before that if you are wrong about Jesus, you're wrong about God. That's what Jesus is saying here. He says, "He that believeth on me, believeth...on him that sent me." Believing in Jesus is the same or equal to believing in God the Father. Secondly, verse 45, to see Jesus with spiritual eyes is to see God—not to see Jesus is not to see God. If you don't believe on Jesus, you don't have God the Father; if you don't see Jesus with spiritual eyes, you don't see God. Then, notice verse 46, thirdly, to believe in Jesus is to be in the light; to reject Jesus, is to be in the darkness. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." If you have believed in Jesus, if you've seen Jesus, then you are walking in light and you have God the Father.

Notice the fourth statement, verses 47-49, to reject Jesus, means to count as nothing, is to reject the words of God which result in judgment. He says (verse 48), "He that rejecteth me,

and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Jesus didn't come in His first coming or advent to judge, He came to die for our sins. But He's coming back the second time to judge, and the words that He spoke will bring judgment against those who rejected Him and didn't believe on Him.

Here's the last and fifth, verse 50, to believe in Jesus brings everlasting life. What a great summary of not only who is Jesus but the fact that He reveals God the Father, He brings forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Notice it in verse 50. He says, "And I know that his commandment is life everlasting," so if you believe on Jesus, believe in His Word, you have everlasting life. Put that along John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In 1 John 5:11-12, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

In conclusion, you might want to write down Hebrews 1:1-2. I love Hebrews 1:1-2. Do you know what it says? It says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners," different ways, "spake in time past unto the fathers by," through and in, "the prophets," then he says, "Hath in these last days," you know when the last days begin? When Jesus Christ came into the world. But in these last days, God the Father has spoken in, by, and through His Son, "by whom also he made the worlds." The writer of Hebrews is telling us that Jesus is God's last word to man. Jesus Christ is God's last word to man. If you reject Jesus, you've just rejected God. If you reject Jesus, you reject God's revelation to man and God's last word to man. It's like God is saying, "Okay, I'm going to speak to you; okay, I'm going to reveal Myself to you. My Son's going to come, born of a virgin, live a sinless life, perform all these miracles, die on the cross, buried, raise from the dead, ascend back into heaven; and if you reject that, I'm finished talking to you." If you reject Jesus and you reject God's Word, God's not speaking. If you throw the Bible away and throw Christ away and reject Jesus Christ, God's not speaking to you. He spoke in His Son once and for all; and if you're not listening, you are in danger of committing what is called the unpardonable sin.

The unpardonable sin is not committed by a Christian. Christians are saved and cannot be lost. It's committed by a non-Christian. It's committed when the Holy Spirit comes to convict you, to open your eyes, to soften your heart, to bring salvation and you say, "No, I will not believe. No, I don't want to believe. No, I don't want to surrender. No, I won't yield my life," and you deliberately and intentionally turn and reject Jesus Christ; and you do it over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over. Do you know what happens? You cannot believe. You will spiritually atrophy. This is why it's so important. The Bible says, "Today, if you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." If you hear God speaking to you, there's still hope. You haven't reached the point where God abandons you to your own lusts and darkness. God is merciful, God is kind, God is patient, and He's long-suffering; but it will reach a point in time where your heart will atrophy, your eyes will spiritually atrophy, and you won't be able to believe.

If you believe that you need to get saved tonight, if you believe you need to get right with God tonight, don't wait. "Oh, but what will my friends say? Oh, what will my friends think? What will

my husband say? What happens at my job? I have to give up some of my plans. I won't be able to have fun anymore. I love the praise of men more than the praise of God."

One of my favorite Bible commentators is a man by the name of Harry Allen Ironside. He said when he was a little boy growing up, his mother would pull him close and put him on her knee and would say, "Harry, it's so important that you open your heart to Jesus. Harry, it's so important that you trust in Jesus, that you make Him your Lord and Savior." He said, that as a young boy, I used to say, "Mom, but what will my friends think? They'll laugh at me. They'll laugh at me if I become a Christian." She said, "Harry, they can laugh you into hell, but they can't laugh you out of hell." He said, "Those words from my mother never left me." Thank God for mothers. Amen? He said, "They bothered me and pestered me, 'They can laugh me into hell, but they can't laugh me out of hell.'" He finally came to the realization of Why should I worry about what people think about me? Why would I worry about what people say about me? It's God's approval that I want. Amen? He got down on his knees, repented, believed in Jesus Christ, and became an amazing Bible teacher, pastor, and missionary.

Someone said, "Can anyone willfully reject Jesus and hope to be accepted by God the Father? Can anyone deliberately and willfully reject God's Son and expect God the Father to welcome them in heaven? I don't think so. Let's pray.