

Testimony to the Deity of Christ, Part 3

Scripture: John 5:41--47

Code: 43-31

Alright, let's go to John 5. We're really wrapping up this incredibly powerful and significant chapter of the fifth chapter of John. I would commend its full understanding to you. If you're a guest with us, we welcome you. We're so glad that you're here this morning. Every Sunday morning is a special treasure at Grace Church and we're glad that you enjoyed this one with us.

You would do well to master the fifth chapter because at the heart of the fifth chapter is the essence of the gospel. We could say that one of John's themes is eternal life, everlasting life, and we would be correct. He makes reference to everlasting life over and over and over again because the message of Christianity, the message of Jesus, the message of the preacher of the gospel is an invitation to eternal life. The message of Christianity is not that Jesus wants to make you successful. It's not that Jesus wants to give you purpose. It's not that Jesus wants to elevate you in your job. It's not that Jesus wants you to be happy. It's not that Jesus wants you to be wealthy. The message of Christianity is that the Lord offers you eternal life, forgiveness of sin and eternal life in heaven. And His everlasting Kingdom, which is everlasting joy and peace and gladness and an adventure the likes of which you can't even imagine, that's the message of Christianity, it's about eternal life. John's emphasis is on eternal life, not only in his gospel but even in his epistles he talks about eternal life.

There is a way to receive that eternal life and it's by believing. And so we call John the gospel of belief, the gospel of eternal life, and the gospel of belief. It's by believing. But not just believing in anything, he talks about faith again and again and again, talks about believing and not believing, belief and unbelief, all throughout this gospel.

There's another element to it that is absolutely critical that connects to believing and that is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that's the thesis of this gospel. "These things that are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have eternal life in His name." So it's about eternal life, it's about believing, but it's about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. So you have to know who the Lord Jesus Christ is. Therefore this is a biography of Jesus, a selective biography of Jesus like the other three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. They're all histories of Jesus so that you might know and believe who He is and believing in Him His person and His work have eternal life in heaven. That's Christianity. That's the message of Christianity. It's not about health and wealth in this life. It's not about morality. It's not about changing social structures. The message is the life to come, everlasting life, eternal life through believing and believing not just in anything but believing in the Lord Jesus

Christ.

So the Son of God comes to the nation Israel, the people of God who are to be God's missionary nation. They're not the end, they're the means to the end. The end is the world, to take this message of eternal life and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ to the end of the world, the end of the earth. And that's why we're told to preach the gospel to every creature. But that commission originally was given to Israel. They were to be the missionary people of God.

However, John also tells us He came to His own and His own received Him not. And we know that because they reject Him all the way through His ministry and actually have the Romans execute Him. And they say, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Now, when we come to chapter 5, we begin to see this very clearly because in verse 16 the Jews are persecuting Jesus, persecuting Jesus. In verse 18 they're seeking all the more to kill Him. So the murder plot is already in place and we're many, many months away from the actual execution of Jesus but the plotting began very early. So that's the message of the gospel of John. The Lord comes into the world. He is the Creator, chapter 1 says. Everything was made by Him, nothing was made without Him. He is life itself. He is the Creator, the one who gives life. He is the eternal one. He comes into the world. He is the one in whom we must believe in order to have eternal life. And His own people who are to be the missionary to the world will not believe Him. So He begins then to go for those who will believe, it's a small group. There are a few by the time we get into this portion of chapter 6 He has some followers but you'll see when we get in to chapter 6, they start to disappear. Some of the initial followers start to vanish and go away because it really isn't turning out to be what they want and eventually it's a small group of people who end up following Christ. And it's opened up beyond the Jews to the Gentiles and the church is established and the church then becomes the mission agency to the world to replace a failing Israel.

When we come in to chapter 5 then, the heart of the message of the gospel of John is if you're going to have eternal life, you must believe. And if you're going to believe, you must believe in Jesus Christ and you must believe that Jesus Christ is God...God, an uncreated eternal being, the second member of the Trinity. So John 5 gives us the declaration of the deity of Christ. In verses 17 to 24, Jesus declares Himself God by saying He is the same as God in every area. And in verse 23 He says He's to be worshiped as God is worshiped, honored as God is honored. If you don't honor Him, you don't honor God. So He gives His own personal declaration of His deity.

Then, that goes down to verse 29, starting in verse 30 He calls on other witnesses because somebody's going to say, "Well why should we believe You? You can't build on Your own testimony." So He even says, "If I alone testify about Myself...verse 31...you're going to conclude My testimony is not true, I need further witnesses. So there's another who witnesses of Me and that's the Father." And He turns to the witness that God the Father has given through John the Baptist, through the miracles

and through the Old Testament. And we looked at all of that. So it is a declaration by the Son of God Himself as to who He is, attested to by the Father through John the Baptist, through the miracles that Jesus did which the Father enabled Him to do and through the Old Testament.

And they don't believe. In spite of all of this, they don't believe and we come down to verse 40. "And you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. You are unwilling." We talked about that at the very beginning of our study of this chapter, you are unwilling to come to Me. How sad is that with all that supporting evidence that He is who He claims to be. And they all saw it, they all said John the Baptist is a prophet, all men perceive John to be a prophet, the New Testament says. Everybody said he's a prophet from God. We know how his parents were barren and in their old age God miraculously enabled them to conceive a son. We know that that son was unique, he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. He had a unique ministry in the wilderness. He was preaching repentance in preparation for the Kingdom and the arrival of Messiah and the whole nation affirmed him as a prophet. And then rejected what he said.

We all know the miracles of Jesus, the nation of Israel knew the miracles of Jesus. He did them on a daily basis. And even Nicodemus who was THE teacher in Israel and one of the main leaders in the hierarchy of Judaism said, "We know You're a teacher come from God because no one can do the miracles You do except God is with Him." So they affirm that Jesus is from God because of the miracles that He did which they never denied. And then they reject Him. So they say John's a prophet, we reject his message. Jesus is from God, we reject Him. and they, according to verse 39, search the Scriptures all the time, read the Scriptures, prided themselves on the Old Testament. And the Old Testament was all about Christ and they rejected Him. So they rejected Christ's own claims, the Father's testimony through John, through the miracles and through the Scripture.

And it all came down to this in verse 40. They were unwilling. They were unwilling. I want to stop here and you need to make sure you understand this. Sinners are going to be held responsible before God for their unwillingness...for their unbelief. In John chapter 3 and verse 19, we hear about their judgment. This is the judgment that the light, meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. Men who love sin hate righteousness. Men who love the darkness hate the light. This then is the judgment. The judgment will fall because they were unwilling to leave their sins and their darkness. It's the unwillingness of the sinner that is the basis of judgment.

Now I say that because we understand that the Bible teaches this, that if you're saved, it's the will of God. If you're saved, God gets the credit. We saw that in John 3, you must be born from above. Something has to happen to you that you don't contribute to. So we give God all the credit for our salvation, that's biblical. But the sinner takes all the responsibility for his unwillingness and unbelief. Those two truths are clearly taught in Scripture. If you have trouble harmonizing them, join the human race. The most astute theologian on the planet realizes those two truths go parallel together and will

only be explained to us one day when we meet the Lord. But we also understand how feeble our minds are.

I just want to emphasize, all responsibility for unbelief always falls on the sinner. All responsibility for unbelief always falls on the sinner. Let me take it a step further. It doesn't fall on the sinner's environment. It doesn't fall on the sinner's parents. It doesn't fall on the sinner's bad circumstances. It falls on the sinner. Salvation is because God wills. Condemnation is because the sinner is unwilling. And the Bible is clear on both of those. Judgment is never ever attributed to a decision made by God. It's always attributed to an unwillingness in the sinner. Judgment is not a matter of God being unwilling to receive cause the Bible keeps saying, "Whoever believes...Whosoever believes...Whoever comes, let him come. I will in no wise turn him away. Come unto Me all you who labor and who are heavy laden and I will give you rest," Matthew 11.

So judgment is never attributed to some decision by God, some decree by God, or God's unwillingness to receive a sinner. The sinner's condemnation is never because there is some limit in the atoning work of Christ. It's never attributed to a limited atonement so that there's no way to include these people because there's no provision for them. Furthermore, judgment is never attributed to a lack of invitation, because we're to take the gospel invitation to the ends of the world to every creature. It's never attributed to an absence of information. Always the sinner's judgment is simply and entirely the sinner's unwillingness to believe.

So our Lord concludes this chapter then with some words about the unwillingness of the sinner that are very, very instructive. What is the diagnosis of this unwillingness? What are the components of this unwillingness? What are the elements of this unwillingness?

Now he's talking directly to the Jewish leaders. When John uses the term "The Jews," he's referring to the leadership, not necessarily the whole nation. And he's here talking to the leaders and he's diagnosing their unwillingness to believe. But that's only the immediate context, that's not the limit of this because the whole nation fell into the same category of unwillingness and you're living in the twenty-first century of a world that has continued to be unwilling. So the principles of unwillingness and the character of unwillingness are still today exactly what they used to be. This then speaks to us.

Now when I get to the end of this, I'm going to help you to turn this in to something that I think will be very encouraging to you. We're going to come in the back door to some things that I think will be a great help to you.

The Lord assesses three elements to their unwillingness: an unwillingness to glorify Christ, and unwillingness to love God, and an unwillingness to believe Scripture...an unwillingness to glorify Christ, honor Christ, and unwillingness to love God and an unwillingness to believe Scripture. This is

an indictment of epic proportions against the Jewish leaders because this is saying you will not honor your Messiah, you will not love your God, and you will not believe your Scriptures. And those are the very things they would have prided themselves on. They were...they were to the max messianic, living in messianic hope waiting for the arrival of Messiah. And yet when He came, refused to glorify Him. They prided themselves on loving God, that was their stock-in-trade, they were God lovers. And yet Jesus' diagnose is the very opposite, you do not love God. And, of course, they believed that they were the true and faithful interpreters and servants of Scripture, the Old Testament. And Jesus says you don't even believe the Old Testament.

So He condemns them at the point of their spiritual pride. They were messianic and yet they don't glorify the Messiah. They were supposedly lovers of God, that was a deception. They gave superficial homage to the Scripture but didn't believe what it said. So He literally cuts deeply into the body, if you will, of their hypocritical false religion.

Now He knew what to say because He knew how they think. If you notice verse 42 begins, "But I know you...but I know you." Now that's not like you would say to somebody, "But I know you." You only know the person from what they said and your experience with them. Jesus knew them because He knew what they thought. Back to chapter 2:23 to 25, "He knew what people thought." So He knows the pathology. He knows the components of this unwillingness.

Number one then, they were unwilling to glorify Him. They were unwilling to glorify Christ. Verse 41, "I do not receive glory from men." That's a point-blank statement. In fact, you could maybe put it in a different order in the original. "From you, I receive no glory. From you I receive no glory." This is the basic point...this is the basic point. You are unwilling to believe because you will not give Me glory. It's about Christ...it's about Christ. I wish the evangelical church would get this right and quit selling the benefits and start selling the benefactor. It's so important that the issue is Christ.

I was telling some of our seminary students, doing some teaching at the seminary classes last week, how many preachers I listen to who have all kinds of things to say but never talk about Christ with any debt. They use His name but it's almost in vain. It's almost a few steps above swearing because there's never any real focus on Christ. The issue for salvation is Christ. Will you honor Christ? That's the issue. Will you abandon yourself? Deny yourself? Take up your cross and follow Christ? That's the issue. And that is the issue He is making here. You don't give Me glory, you give Me no glory. In fact, back in verse 23, remember, He said, "You cannot honor the Father unless you honor the Son. You don't honor Me. You don't give Me glory. You call Me a blasphemer. You persecute Me. You seek to kill Me."

You know, in Isaiah 53 you will remember when we studied Isaiah 53, went through it in detail how that the future generation of Jews that are being depicted there will look back one day and they'll realize what they did when Christ did. Who believed the report given to us? We didn't believe. We

didn't believe what the prophet John said. We didn't believe what the Old Testament said. We didn't believe that this was the arm of the Lord, the power of the Lord demonstrated through Jesus. We didn't believe it. This is going to be their confession and it's the reality. That's exactly what happened.

What did they say? Well He grew up before him, Isaiah 53:2, like a tender shoot. He was like a sucker branch, He was insignificant, just a sucker branch you whack off. He was like a root out of parched ground. He was like a dead root in a crusty soil, useful for nothing, something to be cut away so that people don't stumble over it. That's how we viewed Him. He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, no appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, and the word for men there means leaders...leaders. The leaders didn't think anything of Him. They hated Him. They despised Him. He was a man of sorrows, He was acquainted with grief. Everything about Him seemed tragic. He was just one big epic tragic man and like one from whom men hide their face. You didn't even want to look at Him, like you would turn away from someone so ugly that it would be embarrassing to see them. He was despised and we didn't honor Him. We didn't esteem Him. We didn't think Him anything, we thought Him a nobody.

Now that's exactly what the Jews did to Him and they will one day confess that. So He sums that up in verse 41, "I don't receive glory from men. You don't give Me any glory. And because you don't give Me any glory, you're unwilling to believe." Drop down to verse 44, "How can you believe? How can you believe?" And John circles back to this same point from verse 41, "How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the only, the one and only God.

How can you believe? You can't believe when you're so busy receiving glory that you can't give honor to the glorious one from God. This is the issue. How can you believe? It's not possible. You cannot believe. You're too busy seeking glory from others for yourself. And oh, they were into this as we all know, they were wrapped in the pursuit of self-exaltation, self-promotion, and self-glory. You are busy receiving glory from one another. It was the mutual admiration society among those leaders. You all seek honor from each other, and so there you are honoring each other, elevating and exalting each other.

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, at the end of His ministry, Jesus addresses these leaders of Israel and He confronts this very thing in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, you can just pick it up at verse 4. They do all their deeds to be noticed by men. In fact, John 12:43, I think it is, says they desire the approval of men more than the approval of God. That's what hypocrites do. That's why they're hypocrites. So you do all your deeds to be noticed by men. They broadened their phylacteries. That's a little tiny case that they carried around. I could be wrapped on their wrist or on their forehead and it had Scripture, the Shema Deuteronomy 6, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength, and they would make...instead of just a little box or a little box, they make a big huge box to portray themselves as especially noble and righteous and holy. And then they had tassels,

blue tassels on their garments which were to be reminders of their commitment to God. And they would have long, long, long tassels flowing along, to exaggerate their supposed holiness.

Verse 6, they love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues. And respectful greetings in the marketplace. They wanted to be called rabbi. They wanted to be called father, verse 9 says. They wanted to be called leader, verse 10 says. And they were anything but servants. Jesus in 11 says, "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled." So the Lord cut them down. But that is an illustration of their approach. They sought to please people who had the power to honor them. So if you had the power to honor them, then they sought that honor.

So how...He says...when you are so busy receiving glory from one another could you ever believe in Me? Because to believe in Me you would have to give Me glory." And then the final statement in verse 44, "You do not seek the Glory which is from the one and only God." I wish the translators had capitalized the Glory because I think it's referring to Christ. You do not seek the Glory that is from the one and only God. Or the Greek, "The Glory that is from the only God."

Who is the Glory that it came from God? John 1:14. John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw His Glory as of the only begotten from the Father." There it is. The only begotten is the Glory of the Father manifest. That's just so basic. Believing is not a matter of the head, it's a matter of the heart. It's not about evidence. It's on the condition of the heart.

The parable of the soils, the soils were all different illustrations of different kinds of hearts. In sincerity of heart is an insurmountable barrier to believing. And that's why in Luke 8:15 when Luke gives us his version of the parable of the soils, he talks about a good and upright heart being the good soil. These people had hard hearts. These people had insincere hearts, hypocritical hearts. They were pursuing their own glory and didn't seek the Messiah, the glory that came from the Father. A powerful picture, the Glory that came from the Father.

In 2 Corinthians 4, a passage that I love and often put under my signature if I sign my name to something, 2 Corinthians 4:4. It says that the gospel is the gospel of the Glory of Christ who is the image of God. Christ as seen as the Glory of God manifest. And then in verse 6 it says this, "Light shall shine out of darkness. God is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ." Twice—once in verse 4, and once in 6. Christ is God's Glory shining, God's Glory on display. God's Glory perfectly revealed.

So Jesus says, "Look, you do not give Me glory. You cannot give Me glory, you cannot believe in Me because you are so busy giving glory to each other. It's all about humility, selflessness. That's why Jesus said if you come after Me, deny yourself.

So the first indictment is that you don't really have interest in Messiah, you have only interest in yourself. Here I am, your messiah, you have no interest in glorifying Me. Your interests are completely in glorifying yourself. And the more religious they are, the more they're given to that self-glory.

It was wonderful, wasn't it, to realize that the Apostle Paul saw it as manure? Saw it as manure, all the things he gained. Secondly, and this is an equally powerful indictment of them. They were not only unwilling to give glory to the Messiah when He came, they were unwilling to love God. Verse 42, "But I know you, you do not have the love of God in yourselves." You don't love God. That's just shocking because they had a little box on their hand and a box on their head and in the box these words were written. And this was to be their, I guess you could say, life verse. Listen to this. "Hear, O Israel," this is what's on the box or in the box written, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," monotheism. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, these words which I command you today shall be on your heart. They shall be on your heart." Then He went on to say, "Bind them as a sign on your hand and on your forehead."

What did He mean by that? Apply that when you work and apply it when you think. But because it wasn't in their heart, they put it in a box and strapped it on their wrist and on their head. Not the idea. That's not the point. He didn't say strap this on your head. Think this way. Strap this on your arm. Act this way. They prided themselves on being the lovers of God. He says I know you, you don't...you don't love God.

I want to remind you, folks. If you reject Jesus Christ, you do not love God. You can't love God. Why? Verse 43, "I have come in My Father's name." Wow, they got that. They knew the connection between a son and a father. If a son came in the father's name, you were receiving the father. If you loved the father, you would receive the son. But I've come in My Father's name, you don't receive Me." You don't receive Me. I come from the Father you say you love. You don't love the Father. You will not honor Me, nor do you love the one who sent Me.

That's the basic commitment of every Jew, to love the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and to bind that on his heart and so from the heart it comes out, in the hands and it comes out in the mind. Out of the hands in behavior, out of the mind in thinking.

Now false religion is dishonest, it's all strapped on. It's all stuck on. It's all attached on the outside. It's dishonest because it doesn't live in the heart because people in false religion love themselves, glorify themselves not God and not Christ.

So, if that's the situation, you can't possibly love the Father if you reject the one who came in His name. On the other hand, the end of verse 43, "If another comes in his own name, you'll receive him.

To say that I came in the Father's name would be to say that I came, claimed to be from the Father. It was verified by the Father's testimony through John the Baptist, through the miracles, through the Old Testament as we've said. You're not interested in loving God, you're not interested in honoring Me. But if another comes in his own name, you receive him."

What is that? Well, the history of Israel is a history of false Messiahs and some historians have counted as many as 70 of them that gained ground with the nation...70 different people who claimed to be the Messiah and, of course, were not. And all of them had a following. Sometimes an extensive following. It was the following of a false Messiah that started the revolution that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and about 60 years later after that, another false Messiah comes up and captures the interest of the people. And that has gone on throughout Jewish history.

And by the way, that will continue to go on. If you look back again to Matthew's gospel, our Lord is describing the future and what it's going to be like when the judgment comes. And when the judgment comes, one of the things that our Lord promises is that there are going to be false Christs, Matthew 24, false prophets arise, show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Some people will say, "Here is Messiah. There is Messiah. He's over here. He's over there." There's going to be competition for Messiah in the time of the Tribulation in the future. One will emerge and that will be the Antichrist, the ultimate false Messiah, and he's described in Daniel 9 as the one with whom Israel makes a pact for a seven-year period.

Israel has always been willing to follow a liar and a deceiver and a false Messiah, that's been their history in the past and it will happen again in the future. And they'll be pretty convincing because they'll do what amount to Satanic wonders. They have now, however, been willing to follow the true Messiah whom they had despised and rejected.

So, the first sort of element in describing this unwillingness is an unwillingness to give honor to Christ. The second is an unwillingness to love God who sent Him. There's a third element and we've covered this particular one a lot lately, so we won't go too deeply into it. But, thirdly, they were unwilling to believe Scripture, unwilling to believe Scripture. That...that must have shocked them beyond description.

Verse 45, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. The one who accuses is Moses in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me for he wrote about Me, but if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

They prided themselves on their understanding of Messiah. They prided themselves on their love for God. They prided themselves on their knowledge of Moses. Yeah! Back in Matthew 23 when Jesus starts to talk to His disciples and describe them, He says, "The Pharisees and scribes sit in the seat of Moses." They sit in the seat of Moses. In other words, they rule from Old Testament Law.

And by the way, Moses refers not only to the writings of Moses, but it's a cryptic term for the whole of the Old Testament Scripture. Moses, sometimes Moses and the prophets, sometimes Moses and the prophets and the holy writings. If you want to be formal, there are three sections in the Jewish Old Testament. Moses, which is the first five books, the prophets, the major and minor prophets, and then the rest which are called the holy writings, the Hagiographa. But sometimes it's referred to as Moses and the prophets, and sometimes it's referred to as Moses. Scripture's what's in view here.

But there's plenty about the Messiah in the five books of the Pentateuch that Moses actually authored and much more in the rest of the Old Testament, as you well know. And verse 39 says, "You search the Scriptures." This is what you do. This is your life. This is your trade. This is who you are. You search the Scriptures, present tense. And they did it constantly. And you're looking for eternal life and it's about Me. But you're unwilling to come to Me. Why? Because you don't really believe the Scriptures.

Shock! Shock! In the ninth chapter of John and verse 28, when the leaders again were questioning this man who was blind that Jesus healed, the man said, "Look." He was getting tired of their questions. So in verse 27 he answered, "I told you already and you didn't listen. What? Do you want to hear it again? Why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" He's been reduced to sarcasm here. "So they reviled him and said, 'You are His disciples, we are disciples of Moses.'"

We are those who have the messianic understanding. We are those true lovers of God. It's on our wrists and on our heads. We follow Moses. Truth? You reject the Messiah, you don't love God, and you don't believe Scripture. This is a complete destruction of all their most lofty claims. So don't think that I'm going to be the one that accuses you before the Father. At the judgment, Christ will be the defender and the advocate of those who honor Him and love Him. But the accuser of those who don't, in the case of the Jews, will be Moses. In the case of the Gentiles, the Law written in their hearts, or whatever amount of revelation they may have had, the indictment comes from the rejection of the truth to which they were exposed. Moses will be your accuser.

Can you imagine them contemplating a heaven, arriving and having Moses whom they believed they have honored their whole lives, be the prosecuting attorney to condemn them to hell? That, dear friends, is the doom of legalism. That's why it's manure. You think he'll defend you, he won't. If you believed Moses, you would believe Me because he wrote about Me.

You remember when Jesus told the story about the rich man and Lazarus? At the end of the story the rich man who is tormented in hell says, "Send Lazarus back, send him back to tell my brothers so they don't come here." And Jesus ends the story with this comment, "If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe the One raised from the dead." And Jesus was raised from the dead

and they didn't believe. They made a lie about His body being stolen.

The Old Testament is about Jesus. Beginning at Moses and the prophets and the rest of the Old Testament on the road to Emmaus taught His disciples the things concerning Himself regarding His suffering and glory. And then later that night up in the Upper Room He did the same thing with the rest of the disciples. The only Bible Jesus ever read was the Old Testament. Jesus Himself refers to twenty Old Testament persons and quotes from nineteen Old Testament books. That was His Bible. That was the Apostles' Bible. That was the early gospel preachers' Bible, the only Bible they had. And they found Christ in that as we did in our series.

Stephen alone in his sermon in Acts 7 makes so many references to the Old Testament, I couldn't even count them all. They would be in the fifties in one sermon, one brief sermon, saturated with the Old Testament. From all aspects, Moses, prophets, holy writings.

When the Apostles preach, they preach the Old Testament in Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, Acts 7, Acts 8, on and on, Acts 10, 13 and on and on, Acts 18 as you go through the end of the book all the way to chapter 26, 28. Every time they preached, they quote the Old Testament, it's their Bible as the New is being written and collected, and they're preaching Christ from the Old Testament. They're preaching the gospel from the Old Testament.

And when they wrote the New Testament, there are 312 Old Testament passages quoted specifically in the New Testament, 312 Old Testament passages. There are about five hundred and thirty references to the Old Testament. Fifty in Romans alone. "You know, if you believed the Old Testament, you'd believe Me. But why would you believe Me if you don't believe Moses?" What an amazing indictment. If you don't believe his writings, how do you believe My words?

Even the Jews today are in that same dilemma. If they will not accept what Moses said about the Messiah, then why would they believe in Jesus? So, the deeper look at the issue here, unwillingness basically is a mix of these three things, an unwillingness to give honor to Christ an unwillingness to love God, and an unwillingness to believe Scripture. That's still true.

What is the barrier? What stands in the way? Self, glory for self, love of self, and self becomes the final authority on everything. So that's it. You can lead your life that way. Glorify yourself, love yourself, be the final authority and go to hell. That's how it works. Or you can seek the glory of Christ, love God, believe the Scripture, go to heaven. So now we go through the back door.

In pastoral ministry, you deal with a lot of issues in people's lives as you kind of try to help people enjoy their Christian experience. But the most difficult thing to deal with is, and I think the hardest thing for Christians to cope with is a lack of assurance of salvation, fearing you're not saved, worrying...well I sin, I sin the same way, I fall back to the same patterns. You know, my life isn't what

it should be. I'm constantly disappointed in myself. How do I know if I'm saved? How do I know if I'm saved?

You know, if you go through your life asking those questions, you will really feed that kind of doubt because those are the wrong questions...those are the wrong questions. Let me tell you how you can know if you're a Christian and I'm just going to take what we've learned and turn it into a positive question.

Do you desire to honor Christ? Do you seek to glorify Christ? Do you desire to love God? Do you love God? Do you believe Scripture?

If you do, then the Lord has made an unwilling heart willing and that's the miracle of conversion. Okay? So it's not about asking things that relate to a lack of perfection. It's about asking things that relate to the direction. Do you desire to glorify Christ? Do you love God? Which manifests itself in a desire to worship Him, obey Him, rejoice in Him, praise Him. Do you believe Scripture? Those are unnatural. The natural man doesn't have those delights and desires. So when contemplating your spiritual condition, those are the questions. And if those are answered "I do," and I fall short, then you have been made willing by God.

Father, we thank You for our time this morning. It has been a delight for us to rejoice in the truth again as it unfolds in Scripture. We know Scripture has many critics, but they're ignorant of its glories, ignorant of its majesty, ignorant of its supernatural character. We understand that. But we are not. No matter how deeply we penetrate it, no matter how many questions we ask a passage, it yields rare jewels of divine truth and never disappoints. Belief in Scripture is a gift from You but the growth of that trust in Scripture is a constant benediction that is the fruit of studying it so that our confidence though it always has been there because You made us willing to believe, is strengthened. We believe more now and we believe more every time we're taught again, and we love You more, and we desire to honor Christ more. That's the path that true believers are on. And may we rejoice and not doubt, and enjoy the benediction of assurance.

Thank You for what You're doing, Father, even today in lives by way of conviction, encouragement. For those who are still unwilling, may they understand the seriousness and the condemnation that awaits those who are unwilling. And may they turn from the selfishness that causes them to desire only their own glory, their own fulfillment, make themselves the supreme ruler of their own lives and turn to You and turn to Christ. Do that work, Lord, and we'll give you all the praise. In Christ's name, amen.

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