

This morning we are returning to our study in the gospel of John and we come to the conclusion of John 5. This profound sermon of Jesus defending his equality with God.

Since He healed a man on the Sabbath, earlier in chapter 5, He has been defending that action by making some remarkable truth claims about his own identity.

Highly controversial and incredibly shocking statements to ears of the Jewish leaders who were persecuting Him.

The kind of statements that are going to need some backing, some defense, some testimony.

He knew that a potential accusation was coming from these Jewish leaders: Why should we listen to you? Anyone can go around and talk like this and make these claims? What evidence do you have to back this up?

And so, before they have a chance to bring up this accusation, He brings in some corroborating witnesses, who will testify to the truth of what He's been saying.

**So, last time we met we looked at 4 reasons why one's rejection of Christ is unwarranted.**

**The first reason – His truth claims meet the criteria of the law.**

Look at 5:31, **“If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.”**

That is to say, if I'm the only voice, the only testimony of my own identity, if the only evidence you have is me speaking these words, it should appropriately be suspected and challenged.

I'm going to uphold the principle embedded in the law that every matter must be established by at least two witnesses.

Verse 32, **“There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.”**

The “another” here is God the Father, as the following verses make clear.

The very one they declared to be their God, the very one they claim to be worshipping, Jesus now demonstrates how that very one backs up, testifies to His ministry and claims.

But before He details the Father's witness, He highlights a human witness.

**We then looked at a second reason why one's rejection of Christ is unwarranted – the witness of John the prophet.**

Verse 33, **“You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.”**

You are the very ones who inquired and investigated into John's ministry.

We saw this back in 1:19 where the Jewish leaders sent a delegation out from Jerusalem to the Judean wilderness where John was.

And John testified to the truth. You yourselves heard him proclaim the very same truths you're now hearing from me, with regard to who I am.

You knew about John's ministry, you heard his central message.

But then He makes a clarification in verse 34, "**But the testimony which I receive is not from man,**"

In other words, I'm bringing up John and his testimony not because I am ultimately validated by any mere man. No matter how great he was. I'm not I'm dependent on the testimony of mere man like everyone else.

But I am bringing up John because you did receive him for a season, and if you think back to his message, maybe that will lead you to salvation.

Middle of verse 34, "**but I say these things so that you may be saved.**"

I bring up John and his testimony because he gave you a *preview* of the doctrines about me that I am reiterating and developing right before your eyes.

And if you remember back to what He was saying, it would lead you to salvation.

Verse 35, "**He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.**"

You were drawn to his light like bugs in the darkness are attracted to the light. You admitted he was a prophet.

You accepted him. You gave him a degree of credibility. You rejoiced that God gave your generation a prophet after 400 years of silence. There was an initial enthusiasm and excitement.

You were willing to rejoice *for a while* in his light. It was temporary because the closer you got to the lamp of John, the longer you were exposed to his lamp, the more uncomfortable you became. The more unwilling you were to tolerate him.

You accepted the prophet but rejected His message.

**We then looked at a third reason why one's rejection of Christ is unwarranted: the witness of miraculous works**

Verse 36, "**But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of John*; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.**"

John did no miracles. [[John 10:41]] John performed no sign. His ministry was merely one of proclamation. Proclaiming the truth about the Messiah.

The testimony I have is greater than John's because my testimony is accompanied by miraculous works, that can't be explained apart from God.

You rejoiced in John's light for a season, and all he had was a testimony, all he was doing was speaking.

And now, I speak the same message, and I am doing miraculous works, and not only will you not rejoice in my light for a season, you are seeking to kill me.

My works irrefutably demonstrate that the Father has sent me. They are signposts intended to point you to the truthfulness of who I am.

**We then looked at a fourth reason why one's rejection of Christ is unwarranted – The Father's witness. Verses 37-38**

Verse 37, **“And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me.”**

Notice how He just keeps backing these hardened Jewish leaders into a corner with reliable witness after reliable witness, leading up to the culmination of God the Father Himself.

This is the testimony of the Father *in the Scriptures*. We know that because if we keep reading ahead, it becomes clear.

Skip ahead to verse 38 for a moment: **“You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.”**

Verse 39, **“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”**

So we can see that there's the connection between the Father's testimony in verse 36, and that testimony actually being the witness of the OT Scriptures.

And so here are the Jewish leaders searching diligently, studying and teaching the Scriptures, while never actually believing the Scriptures.

Back to verse 37, **“You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.”**

Metaphorical language indicating you have no actual knowledge of God. You've had access to the Scriptures, a familiarity with the Scriptures, but you've never believed, you've never known God.

You can make no claim on the Father and His Word. Notice that language there in the middle of verse 37, “**at any time.**” There’s never been a point where you have believed.

As Paul would say it in Romans 10:2, “**you have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**”

You have no connection to God, you have no claim on God. You may have the word of God, you may be exposed to it, you might know what it says, but it’s not abiding in you.

Not to mention that God Himself is standing right in front of them. They are *seeing His form* with their own eyes and *hearing His voice* with their ears.

But just like He declared in His use of parables, hearing they do not understand. Seeing they do not perceive. [[Matthew 13:13 ff]]

And He’s informing the Jewish leaders that the Father’s testimony in the OT is a sufficient witness to who I am.

The reason you’re rejecting me is not because I don’t have sufficient testimony, it’s because you don’t actually know the Father.

And so, based on these reasons there is no justifiable reason to not believe, to reject Christ. In other words, there is no excuse.

That is where we left off last time. Which then begs the question: With such sufficient evidence, with such sufficient testimony supporting Christ’s ministry and message, *why did the Jewish leaders reject Him?*

In fact, why does anyone reject Christ? This is what we see now as we come to the conclusion of chapter 5.

He turns the subject matter of this sermon off of Himself and on to those who are rejecting Him. And He’s going to bring charges against them. He’s going to bring indictments against them.

In other words, here’s what’s true of you that not only keeps you from accepting me, but demonstrates you are on the road to destruction.

**In verses 39-46, we’re going to see 3 incriminating characteristics of those who refuse to believe in Christ.**

**The first incriminating characteristic of those who refuse to believe in Christ, they are self-willed. Verses 39-40.**

Self-willed is referring to an obstinate, stubborn pursuit of one’s own way. An unwillingness to yield to the authority of another.

5:39, **“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life;**

Now, you might have a version which renders this as a *command* and not as an *indicative*. In other words, your version might give you the impression that Jesus is exhorting them to **“search the Scriptures”** here.

As if, their failure was having an apathetic approach to God’s Word, a lack of diligence in carefully studying the Scriptures.

And to take this as an imperative is a legitimate translation because the Greek form of the verb is identical for the imperative or the indicative. The context must determine what sense is being conveyed.

But I believe it is clear in this context that Jesus is not instructing them, not exhorting them to do something. Rather He is indicting them as He provides an explanation for why they don’t believe.

In the words of one author, “He’s not telling them to do something. He’s describing the *fruitlessness* of what they do.”

“you search the Scriptures.” This word for “search” is referring to a thorough, exhaustive, careful, intense, diligent examination.

That word is used to refer to the Spirit of God searching our hearts. Used to refer to Jesus Himself searching the mind and heart of individuals. [[Romans 8:27, Rev. 2:23]]

This isn’t a casual, limited, careless searching. What He’s saying to the Jewish leaders here is this: you carefully, exhaustively, diligently study the Scriptures. You are students of the Word, laboring in the Word.

There’s no lack in your effort, in your exposure, in your awareness of what the Scriptures say. Your problem isn’t ignorance or apathy when it came to the Word of God.

We might say it in the common vernacular: There’s no dust on your Bibles.

The problem is rather in their approach, their motivation. Middle of verse 39, **“because you think that in them you have eternal life;”**

Your intense and thorough searching and studying the Scriptures is motivated by a lie you are believing.

*You think, you believe*, that your diligent study of the Scriptures, your exposure and ever-growing knowledge of the Scriptures will gain you eternal life.

In other words, they believed they had life merely in this diligent pursuit. The more effort and knowledge and study, the more life, the closer we are to eternal life.

You use the Scriptures to feed your self-righteousness.

You've set your hope in the Scriptures themselves, and in your own pursuit of the Scriptures, rather than what they actually mean, what they actually testify to.

End of verse 39, **“it is these that testify about Me;”**

What Jesus is referring to here would be the hundreds of references in the OT which are either speaking directly about Him, or foreshadowing Him, or prophecies about Him.

It's not the point here to get specific as to which passages He's referring to.

It would appear, based on verse 46, that He might be thinking first and foremost of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the OT, the books of Moses.

But the point is, you have sufficient revelation in the OT that should lead you to embracing me.

The problem isn't a deficiency in the scriptures you have access to. The problem isn't that you don't carefully and diligently study the Scriptures.

Rather, the problem is there is something in your heart that has prevented you from true understanding.

There is something in your heart that has obscured the true meaning of the Scriptures. The Scriptures testify about me.

Here is the first evidence of self-will. I will determine what the Scriptures mean. I'm an authority over the Scriptures.

I will use the Scriptures in my own way, in a way that God doesn't authorize, that He never intended.

He intended them to testify about Christ. But the Pharisees themselves determined what the Scriptures testified to.

Now, before we keep going here, I want to say a note about a doctrine you may or may not have heard of. It's referred to most commonly as the “Christocentric hermeneutic.”

And the idea is that you are to read the OT with your New Testament glasses on, so to speak. You read the OT from a Christian viewpoint, from a Christ-centered viewpoint.

This enables you to see Christ Jesus “in every verse” or on “every page” throughout the OT.

You approach every story, every paragraph with an interpretive assumption: Christ and His work is here somewhere and it is my job to find Him.

That becomes the goal, the chief end of interpretation, find Christ. Find how this passage points us to the person and work of Christ.

And the reason I bring that up right now is that one of the passages that is used to defend this approach to the OT is John 5:39. **“it is these that testify about Me.”**

Or even skipping ahead verse 46, **“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.”**

And so the argument is, “You see, when Jesus came, He Himself said that all the Scriptures point to Him and we need to adopt this perspective when we read the OT.”

But is that really what He is doing in a passage like this? Is that what Jesus is teaching these Jewish leaders here?

Is He given them and us a *hermeneutical key* to go back and unlock the true meaning of the OT? A meaning which couldn't be known until Jesus came and told us how to read it and interpret it.

Let's look over at Luke 24 for a moment. We're looking at this passage because it is the main passage, the most popular passage used in support of what is known as the Christo-centric hermeneutic.

You'll notice the similarities between this and our passage in John. But here in Luke 24 He gets even more specific.

This is after the resurrection, He is interacting with a few of his disciples who aren't connecting the dots about the significance of his death and resurrection.

Notice what Jesus says to them: Luke 24:25, **“25 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”**

**“27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”**

And so the argument is the same one that is made from our passage back in John: “Look, here is Jesus Himself, from Moses and all the prophets, showing them how everything that was previously written was about Him.”

“At this very point, He gave them the proper way to read the OT.”

And so, the argument goes, “If you're reading the OT like a Jew under the old covenant – you read about Abraham or Job, for example, and you don't make the connection to Christ Jesus, you're not understanding it. You need to read it and interpret it in light of what Jesus accomplished when He came.”

But perhaps you're already spotting the self-defeating nature of this argument. Why do I say that?

Well, for instance, in Luke 24, is not Jesus rebuking them here for failing to know something they *should* have already known, they *could* already have known, *before* He came and talked to them right here?

In other words, if Jesus came and told them how to read the OT. You just need to put your Christian glasses on when you interpret the OT, you need to read it and interpret it in light of my work on the cross and my resurrection..."

Well, why are these disciples being rebuked and called foolish and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken?

Every proponent of the Christocentric hermeneutic admits you wouldn't know to read the OT like this until Jesus came and told you to.

And yet, if that is truly the case, couldn't these disciples have said to Jesus right here: "Why are we being rebuked? You didn't give us the Christocentric hermeneutic yet. Why we are guilty of this. You haven't shown us yet how to read the OT and find Christ in every passage? "We don't have the NT, we couldn't have known what these things meant."

But that's not what's happening here is it? He rebukes not for something they *couldn't have known* before He came and before the NT was written.

Rather, He rebukes them for something they *should have known*, based on the assumption that the OT can stand on itself.

And so it becomes a self-defeating argument if we simply look at the details and consider how they are not being instructed to read the OT differently, they are being rebuked for not reading it carefully and believingly.

And you say, "But what about that language back in verse 27, it sure seems like He is saying that everything points to Him?"

Well, again, just notice what it *does* and *doesn't* say: He doesn't say that the things concerning Himself are in every passage of Moses and the prophets.

Rather, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."**

There are things concerning Jesus in Moses and the prophets. And He took the time to point those things out and explain them.

And so, rather than supporting a Christocentric hermeneutic, this passage in Luke actually teaches the opposite.



Based on an accessible and plain literal understanding of the OT, you should have already been aware of the things concerning me.

Back to John 5. He is indicting the Pharisees for the very same thing. End of verse 39, “**it is these that testify about Me;**”

You’ve missed all the things concerning me in the OT. You’ve missed the pointers.

Verse 40, “**40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.**”

Here’s the second evidence of self-will. **You are unwilling to come to Me.**

It’s a problem of the will. He doesn’t say, “and you are ignorant, you just need more information.”

No, unbelief is never, in any case, due merely to ignorance, a lack of knowledge about God.

This goes for those in a religious environment who have access to the written revelation of God in the Scriptures.

And it also applies to the person who has never read a Bible, heard about Christ Jesus, in some foreign land without any gospel witness.

Romans 1:18-25 clearly indicates that whatever they do know to be true about God through general revelation, they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They exchange the truth about God for a lie.

No one is ever in a position where they can truthfully say, “I wanted to know more about God, I wanted to be saved, I was willing to be saved, but He didn’t give me the knowledge I needed.”

No, the knowledge you do have innately through general revelation, you suppress in unrighteousness.

Unbelief is always a *moral* issue. And we see idea reinforced right here “**you are unwilling to come.**” That’s the issue.

The evidence is there. You have sufficient revelation in the OT Scriptures that should have led you to embracing me, but there is something in your heart that had made you unwilling to understand the Scriptures and their testimony of me.

As one author put it, “pride swallows up all the evidences and reinterprets them to serve its own agenda.”

Let’s also allow the verse to speak to any hyper-Calvinists in the room this morning.

A hyper-Calvinist is one who takes the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation out of biblical balance by making it the *only* doctrine when it comes to God and man in salvation.

When that happens, we might view God's sovereignty in salvation like He is some sort of divine goalie - and as people come to him to be saved, He only allows those in who He chose for salvation.

But those whom he didn't choose, he protects the goal, he defends the goal like a goalkeeper, and shoves them away because He didn't choose them.

And in that case you end up with an unbiblical idea that now places the blame on God for their unbelief and their damnation.

In contrast to that idea, how does God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, explain man's unbelief? **"You are unwilling to come to me so that you may have life."**

It is man's unwillingness to be saved.

Why does anyone end up in eternal judgment? It is not God's unwillingness to save. It is not God preventing man from coming because He is not one of the elect.

It is entirely man's fault, entirely man's unwillingness to come.

JC Ryle strikes the biblical balance for us: "Man's salvation, if saved, is entirely of God. Man's ruin, if lost, is entirely of himself. He "loves darkness rather than light."

Now, back to our passage in John 5. Jesus is going to go on here and get even more specific. What is behind this unbelief? Why were they unwilling to come?

We've seen the first incriminating characteristic of those all those who refuse to believe in Christ – Self-will

**That brings us to the second – Self-Worship.** Verses 41-44

Verse 41, **"I do not receive glory from men;"**

This appears to be a somewhat confusing statement because we know that Christ Jesus does, *at least in some sense*, receive glory from men. He is praised, glorified, honored by men.

In fact, earlier in chapter 5, Jesus Himself highlights the purpose for why the Father has given all judgment to the Son:

Back up to verse 23, **"so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."**

And so men are called to honor, to glorify the Son even as they do the Father. So there is certainly one sense in which He receives glory from men.

But as we consider verse 41 in the same sermon, He now appears to be saying I *don't* receive glory from men.

How do we reconcile this? Well, remember back to John 5:34, we read it earlier, Jesus made a similar statement: **“34 But the testimony which I receive is not from man...”**

Well again, taken isolation that's a potentially confusing statement. John the prophet, John the testifier, didn't witness on your behalf? He didn't provide testimony for you? The very forerunner of the Messiah?

The one who came as a witness to bear witness about Christ. John 1:7.

Jesus is not denying the importance of John's testimony or denying that man does testify about Christ.

What Jesus is saying there is I'm bringing up John and his testimony not because I am ultimately validated by any mere man. No matter how great he was. I have a far superior testimony to that of John. My miraculous works and the Father Himself.

And so, back to verse 41, there is a sense in which He receives glory from man, as we talked about it.

But the key to understanding this statement is of course the context, and recognizing that Jesus is making a distinction between Himself and His Jewish adversaries here.

Skip ahead for a moment to verse 43 and we can see this language of “receive” and “glory” used: **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.**

So notice the repetition of the word “receive.”

**44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?”**

What type of *reception* and what kind of *glory* is He referring to back in verse 41 when He says, **“I do not receive glory from men;”**

I don't need man to honor me or esteem me or praise me. I don't long for and love the approval of men rather than God.

So, when you see the word “glory” here don't think in terms of the glory of God, but rather in terms of “approval.”

In fact, skip ahead for a moment and look at John 12:42, **“Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;**

And then John adds the devastating indictment: **43 for they loved the approval (that’s the word for glory) of men rather than the approval of God.”**

They loved the fame, recognition, prestige, honor, the significance of men rather than the fame, recognition, prestige, honor of God.

They cared more about what people thought of them than what God thought about them.

That’s what Jesus is saying back in 5:41, **“I don’t receive glory from men.”**

I don’t receive approval or praise from men as if it would control me or influence me.

I don’t need the kind of glory, you might assume I live for.

Verse 42, **“but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.”** [[objective genitive – love for God]]

Meaning, you yourselves do not love God. [[see Luke 11:42]]

The greatest commandment in Matthew 22:37, **“37 And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”**

No one loves God like that. The way they are called to, the way they ought to, the way He is worthy to be loved.

But God’s people *do love Him*, as imperfect and weak as it may be.

What Jesus is saying here in John 5:42 is that you don’t love Him at all. You don’t have any love for God.

How does He know that for sure? Because unlike Him, they *do* receive glory from men.

Verse 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.”**

The others here could be referring to false prophets, and false Messiahs who have always appeared in the nation of Israel and attempted to create a following.

In fact, one resource I was reading said that as many as 70 false messiahs had some degree of influence within Israel.

It was true then and Jesus said it would be true for all time, specifically as human history begins to draw to a close:

Think of passages like Matthew 24:5, **“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.”**

So here in our passage, He could be referring here to the false prophets who kept appearing in the history of the Jewish people.

But at the same time, the specific identity of these individuals isn’t the point here. The point is, when another comes in his own name. That is self-promoting, self-exalting, self-willed, you will receive him.

Why? Because he’s just like you. John Piper writes, “he would be an endorsement of the way they are. He would make them feel okay with their love of their own name and their own self-exaltation.”

You won’t receive those who want to exalt God, because that is at odds with who you are. You’re much more comfortable and willing to receive those who exalt self, because that’s who you are.

Now, this is not a direct parallel, but certainly a similar principle at work in why people don’t want to commit to an expository ministry.

Why shallow ministries or even heretical ministries are so popular. And from the outside looking in, we might say, “how can you tolerate that, it’s so fake, it’s so shallow.”

But what explanation does Paul give for why people attend ministries like that? You’re familiar with it, I’ll just read it for us - Timothy 4:2:

**“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers (they will seek out teachers – what kind of teachers?) in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”**

Teachers, who in the name of religion, in the name of Christianity, preach a gospel of the flesh. A gospel that panders to man’s fallenness.

The people who are part of these ministries, they are victims in one sense. They are being lead astray. Many times it is a case of “they don’t know what they don’t know.”

But they are *culpable victims* because they want what those teachers are offering them. They want God on their own terms.

They want a ministry that will allow them to be self-worshippers, but to do so in the name of Christianity.

Back to John 5:43, notice, they come with no credentials, “in their own name.” In their own authority. Their credibility is in themselves.

Self-appointed with no witnesses or testimony like Jesus has, yet He says to these Jewish leaders, that’s the kind of guy you would follow.

Again, this is certainly not a direct parallel, but I couldn’t help but think how many ministries today are led by a man who came in his own name.

He may have a great statement of faith and even be doing exposition. He has a seminary degree from a reputable seminary.

But He is self-appointing.

No elders have evaluated him and watched him and confirmed his character and gifting and calling.

No elders have laid their hands on him and sent him out with their full support and blessing. Holding him accountable to stay faithful to his professed philosophy of ministry and his professed doctrine.

Hardly anybody asks, “how did this church begin?” how do we know this man is indeed qualified and hasn’t just assumed he has a right to be in ministry because he went to seminary?

And then a few years down the road when he has a moral failure, or when he recognizes I’m not called to ministry, the church is confused and disillusioned.

How could this be? He had good doctrine and seminary degree from this great institution. Yeah, but he didn’t actually have biblical credibility and biblical justification for being in ministry.

Or, maybe he’s part of concerning trend of the average tenure of a pastor in one location – 3-4 years.

Why is that? Why is the average tenure of a pastor 3-4 years? Well, certainly there are many reasons, but I wonder how many of them have to do with this principle we’re highlighting right here?

Because consider what happens in any relationship after around 2 years: What is known as the honeymoon period ends.

It was great at the beginning, everyone worshipped him, and praised him, and approved of him, and it fed his personal significance.

But when that glory starts to fade, when the buzz of the honeymoon fades, it's time for him to move on to the next ministry where he can ride the honeymoon period again.

That is a man who has come in his own name and ministers for his own glory.

And when that characterizes an individual, they aren't a believer.

I say that because of what Jesus says back in our passage as this indictment continues: Verse 44, **“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?”**

This is a statement of inability, impossibility. When your agenda in life is to seek the praise and approval and honor that comes from mere man - that is incompatible with saving faith.

If your life revolves around the praise of men, the acceptance from men, the approval of men, Jesus says that kind of lust crowds out saving faith.

It's so interesting what He doesn't say here, in light of how the Pharisees would have posed this question themselves.

You remember the Pharisee in Luke 18 who prided himself on not being like other men, like pagans – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, tax collectors – I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.”

That's what a Pharisee thinks the main difference is between the converted and the lost.

Observable, external righteousness.

But notice what Jesus doesn't say in our passage: “How can you believe when you are an extortioner, or an adulterer, or when you fail to keep the law?

How can you believe when you live such a pagan lifestyle? How can you believe when you drink so much or live in immorality so much?”

How can you believe when you don't go to church or read your Bibles?

That's not what He highlights here: Rather, how are you able to believe when you are enslaved to the craving to receive glory from one another?

You remember what Paul said in Galatians 1:10, **“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”**

This is the great divide in the Scriptures. Those who fear man and those who fear God.

To receive or crave glory from another is to fear them. That is the fear of man.

To fear someone can mean holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by someone, worshipping someone, putting your trust in someone, needing someone, finding your significance in someone and their acceptance of you.

Fear of man, therefore, is the controlling power, the controlling influence of other people in my life. It is to put people in your heart where only God rightly belongs.

Remember a few weeks ago, we talked about how it is a moral reason why we don't accurately interpret Scripture.

This passage in John is yet another passage demonstrating that reality.

The true cause of their unbelief, the true cause of them not seeing how the Scriptures testified of Christ, was because they care more about pleasing one another than God.

JC Ryle, "Believing or not believing, to have faith or not to have faith, is not a thing that depends only on a man's head being satisfied, and his intellect convinced."

"It depends far more on the state of a man's heart. If he privately cares for anything more than God's praise,—he will go on to the end of his days doubting, perplexed, dissatisfied, and restless, and will never find the way to peace."

In other words, if you live for your own glory, if you are what one author called a "narcissistic religionist," you can't believe.

Every person has to answer this question: Whose glory do you love more? Why do you live? And does your life match up consistently with your profession?

You either live thinking, how good or bad does this make me look? Or you live thinking how good or bad does this make God look?

And Christ Himself declares in this passage that being a self-worshipper is incompatible with saving faith.

Self-will

Self-worship

**Now the third incriminating characteristic of those who refuse Christ Jesus - Self-works.**

That is to say, those who refuse Christ are legalists. Despite what many churches might say today, a legalist is not someone who insists on obedience and stresses the importance of obedience, and conforms to the commands of God.

If that's a legalist, then Jesus Himself was the most notorious legalist of all time. [[Matthew 5:17-20]]



Rather, a legalist is one who puts their hope, their trust in their obedience to the law. They trust that they are righteous before God due to their adherence to the law. [[Luke 18:9-14]]

This is verses 45-46. Verse 45, **“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.”**

Now, yet another example of a statement Jesus makes that is potentially confusing.

Especially in light of John 5:22 in this same sermon: **“The Father has given all judgment to the Son.”**

Verse 27, **“27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”**

His Jewish opponents here *will* have to deal with Him as their judge. He will indeed condemn them.

He’s not denying that reality back in verse 45. What He’s demonstrating is that you don’t need to assume that this is merely a matter between you and me.

As if I alone will accuse you before the Father. Moses, as in the writings of Moses, that’s enough to condemn you.

This isn’t some new religion I’m advocating here. You stand under condemnation currently.

The one who presently accuses you is Moses. He’s not talking about Moses as some kind of eschatological judge that all Jews will face upon death.

He’s talking about the writings of Moses.

We know because verse 46 he explains it: **“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.”** [[Gen. 3:15; 9:26; 22:18; 49:10; Num. 24:17; and Deut. 18:15–18]]

These writings, which you have memorized, which are read daily in your synagogues, these are a constant testimony against your unbelief.

Again, showing the continuity, the congruity between the law of Moses and the message of Christ.

He traces their rejection of Him to their rejection of Moses’ writings.

Notice that last phrase there again in verse 45, **“in whom you have set your hope.”**

You have hoped in the very thing that will condemn you. You’re legalists, because everyone is a legalist by nature.

Everyone is self-righteous by nature.

Due to their natural legalism and self-righteousness, they did not use the law appropriately. They set their hope in the law and their ability to conform to it.

It's interesting if you glance over for moment at 1 Timothy 1:8, **“8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully...”**

The law is beneficial as long as one respects its specific functions and limitations.

We're not going to take the time to look at all of these references but here are the functions of the law:

It communicate a righteous and divine standard.

It exacerbates human sinfulness. That is to say, due to man's depravity, the law stirs up and provokes rebellion in our hearts.

It instructs and encourages believers.

It restrains evil deeds.

But notice in this passage what function Paul highlights in verse 9, **“realizing the fact that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless.”**

It is, as one scholar put it, “a loving death notice.” It shows men their depravity and reveals their state of condemnation. Their utter inability to live up to God's righteous standard.

And constantly reminds them of their hopeless state of condemnation without a redeemer.

The Pharisees believed as though the law was made for the righteous and therefore they put their trust, their hope in their ability to keep it.

It became an end, in and of itself, instead of what it was designed to do: not feed one's self-righteousness, but completely devastate the hope anyone would have of salvation apart from Christ.

This is what a legalist does. They set their hope in the very thing that will condemn them. Their own righteousness.

Back to John 5:47, **“But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”**

This means, there is no such thing as a Jewish person then, or today, who believes what we call the Old Testament, who accepts the Old Testament, while at the same time rejecting Christ.

The Old Testament Scriptures are of equal authority with the teaching of Christ: they are equally the Word of God.

To capitulate or disbelieve the OT, you will eventually do the same with the NT.

### **3 incriminating characteristics of all those who reject Christ**

**Self-will** – they will not come under the authority of Scriptures. They are unwilling to believe what the Scriptures say.

They place themselves above Scripture and determine what it means.

**Self-worship** – they live for self, the glory of self, the craving and approval and glory that comes from fellow man.

**Self-works** – they are trusting in themselves that they are righteous before God. Misunderstanding the purpose and role of God's commandments.