

The Gospel of John

The Unwillingness of Man to Believe

John 5:38-47

INTRODUCTION:

Our spiritual life is only found in Jesus Christ! He is the way, the truth and the life. Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

That is the message of the gospel over and over again. But Jesus tells us that the normal human response is “**you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.**”

The sinner is unwilling to believe the truth even when faced with it. We know the Bible says that the unrepentant man is unable to see. He is spiritually dead. He has been blinded to God and His righteousness by the Fall of man. Then he is double-blinded by his sin and triple-blinded by Satan.

All Stand and Read Scripture.

John 5:38-47 (NASB)

³⁸ You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

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.** ⁴¹ I do **not** receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do **not** have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ I have come in My Father’s name, and you do **not** receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God? 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. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Prayer

The point here is that the sinner is unwilling to believe, even when all the testimony is in and is undeniable. Most people are unwilling to come to Christ. That’s contrary to human nature. Sinful man is both unable to make any contribution to his salvation and unwilling to come to the only one who can save him.

John 8:42-44a, 47 (NASB)

⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth

and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.
⁴³ Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is because you cannot hear My word.*
⁴⁴ You are of *your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.*

...⁴⁷ He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them, because you are not of God.*"

This is the problem. You're unwilling to come to Me because you **DESIRE to do what Satan wants you to do**, not what God wants you to do. This is what it means to be a fallen human being. You can make no contribution to your salvation, and furthermore, you are unwilling to come. You don't want what God wants. You want what Satan wants. "**You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.**"

They were believing superficially, we saw that in chapter 2. They believed He was a prophet sent from God because there was no way to explain away the miracles.

So, in the face of this amazing clear evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world the Jewish leaders are unwilling to believe because that is the normal human condition.

Their unwillingness was not just indifferent, but an aggressively hostile unwillingness. Overwhelming evidence had been presented to these particular Jews by Jesus Christ Himself while in their presence, but they refused to believe.

So what does the sinner do?

John 3:16-20 (NASB)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Whoever **believes** has eternal life! This has nothing to do with the predestination of God, it has to do with the sinner's willingness to believe.

¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Although the light is clear and the truth is evident, men love darkness. **They love their sin!** They desire to do what Satan wants them to do, not what God wants them to do. That is the universal human condition and it is a profound unwillingness that runs deep into the human mind and heart.

The Lord assesses three elements to their unwillingness:

- An unwillingness to glorify Christ,
- An unwillingness to love God,
- And an unwillingness to believe Scripture.

I. UNWILLING TO GLORIFY CHRIST.

John 5:41 (NASB)

⁴¹ I do not receive glory from men;

They were unwilling to glorify Christ. That's a point-blank statement! In fact, you could put the words in a different order from the original. "From **you** I receive no glory."

This is the basic point. They were unwilling to believe because they would not give Jesus glory. It's about Christ. I wish more preachers would quit trying to sell the **benefits** of living for Christ and start selling the **benefactor** Himself.

The issue for salvation is Christ. Will you honor Christ? Will you abandon yourself? Deny yourself? Take up your cross and follow Christ?

Luke 9:23 (NASB)

²³ And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

That's the issue. You don't give Me glory. In fact, back in verse 23,

John 5:23b (NASB)

²³ ...He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

You don't give Me glory. You call Me a blasphemer. You persecute Me. You seek to kill Me."

Isaiah 53 prophesies in detail how the future generation of Jews that are being depicted here will look back one day and they will realize what they did when Christ died. 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.

That is exactly what happened. This is going to be their confession.

What did they say? Well He grew up before him, Isaiah 53:2,

Isaiah 53:2 (NASB)

² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, (The word for men there means leaders...leaders. The leaders didn't think anything of Him. They hated Him. They despised Him.) A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

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.

How can you believe?

You can't believe when you're so busy **receiving** glory that you can't **give** honor to Christ Who came from God. They were all about seeking glory, as we all know. They were wrapped in the pursuit of self-exaltation, self-promotion, and self-glory. It was a "**mutual admiration society**" among those leaders.

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.

Matthew 23:5-7 (NASB)

⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*. ⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

They do all their deeds to be noticed by men.

That's what hypocrites do. You do all your deeds to be noticed by men. They broadened their phylacteries. That's a little tiny case that they carried around. It could be wrapped on their wrist or on their forehead and it contained scripture from Deuteronomy 6:5.

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NASB)

⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

But instead of just 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.

We are told that many believed but would not confess Him.

John 12:42-43 (NASB)

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; ⁴³ for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

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,

John 5:44 (NASB)

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?

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.

II. UNWILLING TO LOVE GOD.

The second indictment against the Jewish leaders was that they were not only unwilling to give glory to the Messiah when He came, they were **unwilling to love God**.

John 5:42 (NASB)

⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

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 "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."

What did He mean by that? He didn't say strap this on your head and strap this on your arm to prove you love Me. **That's not the point!**

Jesus wanted them to apply their love for God when they worked and apply it in all of their thoughts. Allow your love for God to be from your heart

They prided themselves on being the lovers of God. He says I **know** you, you **don't**...you **don't** love God.

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 and glorify themselves; not God and not Christ.

III. UNWILLING TO BELIEVE THE SCRIPTURE.

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. And thirdly, they were **unwilling to believe Scripture**. That revelation must have shocked them beyond description!

John 5:45 (NASB)

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.

They prided themselves on their understanding of Messiah. They prided themselves on their love for God. They prided themselves on their knowledge of Moses.

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.

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

CONCLUSION:

So what stands in the way of our willingness to serve God? Self! Glory for self and love of self. 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 eternal punishment. Or you can seek the glory of Christ, love God, believe the Scripture, and go to heaven.

One of the hardest things to deal with in ministry, is the lack of assurance of salvation. Fearing you are not saved and questioning yourself...Why do I continue to sin? Why do I fall back to the same patterns of sin?. Why isn't my life what it should be?. I'm constantly disappointed in myself. How do I know if I'm saved?

If you go through your life asking those questions, you will really feed that kind of doubt because those are the wrong questions concerning your salvation.

Let me tell you how you can know if you are a Christian.

Do you desire to honor Christ? 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. Our desire to glorify Christ, love God, and believe scripture manifests itself in a desire to worship Him, obey Him, rejoice in Him, and praise Him.

Those desires 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.

The Family of God.