

Series: John

Title: Grace to Unbelieving Believers

Text: John 2: 22-25

Date: Dec 27, 2020

Place: SGBC, NJ

John 2: 23: Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24: But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, 25: And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

The Lord Jesus knows the heart in all men. He does not need that two or three witnesses should testify concerning a man. The Lord Jesus is God—all-knowing—he knows my heart and your heart. He knows exactly what you are thinking right this minute.

Hebrews 4:12: [he is]...*is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13: Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Romans 2:16: [in the day of judgment] God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

He knew these only believed because they saw the miracles which he did. He knew they were spiritually dead, their minds were enmity against him. So he did not commit himself to them. Also, he knew the hearts of the rulers who mocked him, thinking he meant he would raise the temple-building. The fact Christ knows the heart of all men terrifies unbelievers—it should. But it is a great comfort to believers. Here is why. Notice, after speaking of raising himself from the dead:

John 2: 22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

He knew these true disciples did not believe he would die and rise again. Yet, he committed himself to them and continued to teach them because they were his. What a blessing! Though our Lord and Savior knows our unbelief and our sin, he knows those that are his. He knew these were *true disciples*. He found them dead in sins like the rest, fallen sons of Adam. But they were chosen of God and precious. These were his elect for whom he shed his precious blood. He had given them life and faith. They genuinely believed on him. What a blessing! Christ said, “*I know my sheep.*” His grace and knowledge are particular and saving. God the Father chose them and gave them to Christ before the foundation of the world. Christ knows his sheep

2 Timothy 2: 19: The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his

Subject: Grace to Unbelieving Believers

Proposition: The Lord Jesus is gracious to those he has given faith despite how little we know and despite our unbelief.

WE KNOW IN PART

As sanctified believers, taught of God our Father, we know extraordinarily little. They were regenerated by the Holy Spirit like all must be. They had the unction and knew all things. They knew and believed Christ to be their All and in all. And Christ knew their heart of faith. They believed Christ to be their Life, their only Righteousness. And Christ knew their heart of faith. They believe Christ was their only Provider, their only Sustainer. He is the power of God by whom we are kept—of his fulness have all we received grace for grace. Their only Holiness and acceptance with God was Christ. And he knew their heart of faith. He gave it.

John 6: 68: Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69: And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Brethren, salvation is not in what we know or how much we know but *WHO*. God makes us know some vital truths. He makes us know we are sinners—depraved—with no ability to save ourselves or even contribute to our salvation. He makes us know God must do all the saving. Salvation is not by our will or our works. Salvation is of the Lord: from election, to redemption, to regeneration, to preservation, to glorification. So God makes us know Christ is all our salvation. In our text, the word believe is commit. To believe is to personally commit all to Christ, in spirit and in truth, casting all care on him to save us. **BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY SALVATION IS TO BE KNOWN OF GOD OUR SAVIOR!**

Though they knew and believed on the Savior, they knew extraordinarily little. We who believe know extraordinarily little.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly;...now I know in part...

Our Savior taught them plainly that he would be crucified and rise again

Matthew 20: 17: And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19: And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again.

But they were full of pre-judice. They had prejudged based on wrong understanding of scripture and fleshly understanding and ideals they conceived in their minds. So they were convinced that Christ would establish a temporal, earthly kingdom.

Therefore, they could not receive his word and believe that this One who had power to work such mighty miracles would die a shameful death on the cross. From beginning to end, they thought Christ would restore the kingdom in the earth and reign in earthly Jerusalem. So when the Lord was crucified and buried, things did not come to pass according to their preconceived ideal, their hope was dashed.

How we are so like the disciples! Our flesh greatly hinders us. We have our preconceived ideals based on false assumptions and carnal reason. Then we are devastated when God does not bring our ideal to pass. We must be taught of God by divine revelation and be made to believe on Christ and trust that God's Way is the Way.

OUR GRACIOUS LORD AND SAVIOR

In light of their unbelief think how gracious, longsuffering, patient, and forbearing Christ is with us. He knew they did not believe his word concerning his death and resurrection. But oh how gracious our Lord is to us even in the face of how little we know and believe.

We see his grace toward us despite our ignorance. Grace is given to unworthiness. We are not only unworthy, we are full of demerit; not only undeserving but deserving hell. Yet, the Father chose whom he would by free grace—salvation is by his calling, not by our works. Therefore, when we fell in Adam, his love toward us did not change. Likewise, when we are full of ignorance, his grace toward us does not change. The Lord Jesus is ever gracious to his feeble, weak saints.

Psalms 106:43: Many times...they provoked [him] with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44: Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

We see our Redeemer's longsuffering patience. They did not understand and receive his word. Still he was longsuffering and patient and taught them over and over. And he does so with us.

John 14: 4: And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5: Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6: Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 16: 16: A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17: Then said *some* of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

John 16: 28: I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. 29: His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 30: Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. 31: Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32: Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Before our Lord we are little children. You know far more than a little child. How do you deal with the little child? That is how our Savior deals with us. We see when a little child is doing something incorrectly or that it is going to have to be undone or redone. Sometimes we correct them. Sometimes we let them do it just to teach them. I watched one of the little ones take all the hymn books out of the back of the pew. He was so serious. Then I suggested we put them all back. He did it with the same serious intent. To that little fellow he had done something needful and showed me how well he could do it.

Before Christ, that is us when are doing things we think is so important, yes, things that are important. But how little we know compared to our all-knowing God. How often we do things wrong. But before God we are little children and he remembers that we are but dust. We need to remember that about our own selves and about our brethren. We need to remember how he deals with us who know so little and sin so often. It is partly what our Lord meant when he said we must become as little children. We must be as teachable as little children before him and as harmless as little children toward one another.

We see Christ's love and care for his people. In the hour when he faced his greatest sorrow our Saviours heart was on us! He was teaching his disciples, comforting them, when he faced bearing the sin of his people and being forsaken of God on the cross. Yet, as he taught them, they continued to be so full of misunderstanding and doubt and unbelief. But how loving and caring he was in the face of their unbelief. Oh, let us thank God, Christ overrules our unbelief! Oh, let us thank God that our Redeemer is faithful to us when we are not faithful to him! (2 Timothy 2:13). Where sin abounds, His grace much more abounds!

2 Timothy 2:13: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

We see his wisdom in instructing his children according to our need. He could have made them believe but he did not because they could not bear it at the time. Certain scriptures had to be fulfilled which involved Christ being smitten in place of his people and the sheep being scattered. So for reasons known only to God he did not teach them some of the things that he taught them after the cross. Listen to how the Lord dealt in patience prior to going to the cross.

John 16:12: I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13: Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14: He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. 15: All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you.”

He would not press upon them what he had not yet prepared them to receive. He waited until the time appointed. What an example for us to follow! We need discernment and wisdom to know, not only the word suitable to speak, but the wisdom to know the season. So we must wait upon the Lord. We must wait until Christ has prepared the heart. He must break up the fallow ground. He must give us a broken and contrite heart to receive his instruction and to receive our brethren with a humble spirit.

Not only does he prepare us to receive his teaching, also, he must prepare us after he has taught us. Paul would not have been able to bear the abundance of revelation Christ gave him. It would have lifted Paul up in pride. So the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh *“lest he be exalted above measure through the*

abundance of the revelations.” Brethren, we should expect that the Lord will patiently wait, that he knows what each needs to keep us at his feet and that our gracious, all-wise Redeemer will teach us. The thorns our Redeemer gives are not punishment to his people; they are tender mercies to keep us from falling away, to keep us looking only to him.

We see *Christ’s faithfulness*. He went to the cross and redeemed his elect and made us righteous in him exactly as he said he would. Then he came to his disciples and taught them that he is, indeed, risen. And then Christ gave them faith to believe. But even then it was all of Christ’s grace and power to make them believe because they were still full of unbelief. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene and she came and told them he was risen

Mark 16: 11: And they, when they heard he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Even John, who was so attentive to Christ, did not know and understand the scripture until after:

John 20:8: Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. 9: For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

If John remained ignorant of this truth after hearing Christ preach for three years, none of us should be surprised to find a fellow believer slow to believe certain doctrine.

Christ appeared to Cleophas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus but they did not know him—they said, “Have you not heard?”

Luke 24: 20: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21: But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done...25: Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27: And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. [then he opened their understanding.]

They went and told the others.

Mark 16: 12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told *it* unto the residue: neither believed they them.

But Christ appeared and opened their understanding. Thomas said, “I will not believe unless I touch his wounds!” Oh, consider this gracious longsuffering and tenderness. Christ said, “Reach hither thy finger Thomas and touch me!”

In the family of God there are dispositions and temperaments like in an earthly family. Christ knew the tender heart of the woman who broke open the box of ointment and he knew Peter’s temperament. They were so different. Each of his people are redeemed, justified, and sanctified. Each believer is washed in the blood of Christ. All live in the Spirit and seek the glory of God by the grace and power of God. But all are different and gifted with different measures of grace. But Christ knows each of his sheep and will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able. He knows what we need to be taught. He knows when best to teach us. And our all-powerful Head is faithful to do so. He prepares our hearts to receive his word.

If we will remember this, it will save us much trouble and prevent much unkindness. Knowing Christ is Wisdom who knows the heart of each of his redeemed and knowing that Christ alone can teach us, we ought never judge one another harshly. We ought never doubt a brother’s faith simply because they do not know or see or feel or react as we do.

Another thing to remember is that our Lord has not prepared us for things that he has not brought us to face. A brother may have a negative reaction to the trial that you are in while you bear it patiently. It is because the Lord has not prepared your brother for the trial that the Lord has sent to you. Usually, the Lord is using the trial that he has sent to you to prepare your brother. He is working all things together for good to them that love God to them who are called according to his purpose. Amazing Wisdom is our God!

In the Lord's time, when he sees fit that your brother must bear a similar trial, the Lord will have given grace and prepared him beforehand so that he has grace sufficient for the hour. And he gives more grace for the hour! He told Peter, "*What I do now thou knowest not; but thou shalt know hereafter.*"

Remember, when we do not see the Lord working, he is working for us! When we think He has forsaken us, Christ is with us! When we think he has loaded us with trouble, he has loaded us with mercy! In his time he will make each of his saints know and believe on him and rejoice that he did it the way he did it. When Jesus was "glorified" the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth, THEN "*remembered they that these things were written of him; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*"

It is a great comfort to a believer that the Lord knows our heart. He knows our true motive. He gave it. He put the love in the heart that he created. The Lord knew Peter's heart of love even when Peter's flesh made him appear to others to have fallen away. I am afraid we would have judged after carnal sight and thought Peter had denied the faith. But Christ prayed for Peter and for that one reason his faith did not fail. The whole time Peter denied the Lord and left the place the Lord told him to wait and went back fishing—the Lord knew the heart of love that the Lord had created within Peter. So after the Lord sufficiently proved that Peter had no strength in his flesh then the Lord appeared and made Peter acknowledge that the Lord knew his heart. He made Peter acknowledge that the Lord knew his heart to remind him, and us, that only the Lord knows the heart in his people.

John 21:15: So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee [three times until Peter said]...Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Amen!