

” Our Faith and Conduct Must Please God”**John 12:37-50 (vv. 42-43)****Facilitator: Min. Joseph Williams****I. Introduction**

Hebrews 11:16 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” However, within this lesson there is another element to consider as we seek to please God. Our God, without question, is faithful. That is who and what he is; that is His very character. It is critical that we understand our actions and behaviors play an important role in our being found pleasing to God. Read James 2:14-26

II. The Lesson: “Our Faith and Conduct Must Please God”**1. vv. 37- 41.**

John lets us know that the crowd who heard the thundering voice of God do not believe/have faith in Jesus. Notice the characteristics of their unbelief. First, their unbelief is persistent. Verse 37 informs us “they still would not believe in Him”. They did not decide at this moment not to believe but held onto the unbelief that they had all along. Second, they continued to hold onto their unbelief in spite of the many signs that Jesus had performed in their presence. This I like to call a deep-rooted lack of faith/unbelief. Third, the unbelief of the Jews should not come as a surprise, because Israel’s unbelief and rejection of Jesus was foretold by Old Testament prophecy. John selects two texts from the Prophet Isaiah to make this point. He quotes Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 respectively. Clearly Isaiah 53:1 is referencing the Messiah, and thus we see Jesus. The message of the Messiah was not believed (53:1a), in spite of the fact that the arm of the Lord had been revealed” (53:b). The prophecies about the Messiah were not believed, in spite of the fact that many witnessed the mighty and miraculous works of the Messiah, Jesus. The text in Isaiah tells us why.

The Jews could not recognize Jesus as Messiah because of his suffering. They misinterpreted Jesus’ suffering as proof of his guilt and God’s disfavor of Him. This

they could believe, instead of seeing the truth that He was to suffer and die for the sins of all mankind. John lets us know that their rejection of Jesus was not due to any failure on His part, but quite frankly the fulfillment of Scriptural Prophecy. In verse 41 we are told why John quotes Isaiah 6:10. He quotes it because it is the result of God having continually warned Israel about their conduct through the Prophets, but the Israelites had not taken heed to the word of the Lord. Before giving Isaiah his mission, God gives Isaiah a vision of Himself, His glory. Then God commissioned Isaiah to preach to Israel, not so they would repent and be spared from divine judgment, but so that their hearts would be hardened in preparation for the divine judgment that was to come. In our John passages, it is not just the Jewish religious leaders who have rejected Jesus, but a large portion of those who were in Jerusalem for Passover also. John informs us that the glory seen by Isaiah was not only the glory of the Father (God), but also that of the Son (Jesus).

The glory that Isaiah saw was not just the glory of the Lord as He triumphed over His foes, but His glory in suffering. The Jews in Jesus' day may not have been able to reconcile the Messiah's triumph and tragedy of the cross, but Isaiah did. They may not have been able to see how the Messiah could both die and live forever, but Isaiah could. Isaiah was allowed to see the glory of God even in His suffering.

2. **vv. 42-43.**

All the Jews were not non-believers. Besides the disciples and intimate friends of Jesus, there were several of them who believed in Him as the Messiah. This passage is specific in bringing attention to the rulers who believed in Jesus. Is it possible that these rulers could have put a stop to the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus, but chose instead to protect their own interests? Their silence, while cowardly and sinful, was a part of God's divine plan. It was their silence that paved the way for those opposed to Jesus to achieve His arrest, trial and crucifixion. The accomplishment of God's will is not predicated on our obedience or disobedience, but upon the "Sovereignty" of His will. While those who kept silent sinned, God used their sin and cowardice to achieve His purpose. God is not limited to our times of faith and our acts of obedience to achieve His will; He is more than able to use our sinfulness and disobedience to bring about His purposes as well as our obedience. Due to the animosity of some religious leaders, the

cowardliness and sin of others and the crowd's rejection of Jesus, the will of God was achieved as prophesied in the Old Testament.

This passage tells us why the Jewish rulers remained silent; they feared what the Pharisees could do to them. They were afraid of being cast out of the synagogue. While they were willing to identify with Jesus to some extent, these rulers were not willing to break with or stand up to their colleagues. They "loved praise (glory) from men more than praise (glory) from God". The glory that comes from men is the kind of glory we see at Jesus' triumphal entry. It is praise that is rooted in popularity and success, and in living up to man's expectations and goals. The glory that comes from God is that which is often His reward for sufferings, for taking up our cross.

These rulers were not ready or willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. Like many today they were willing to accept the "works" of Jesus (as long as it did not occur on a Sabbath) but not His "words". When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the people wanted His works. But after He taught them in the temple, they did not want His words, because His words spoke of His sacrificial death on the cross.

3. **vv. 44-50.** Jesus' Final Words to Israel

We find nothing new in these verses, but a reiteration of what has been said many times before. In these closing words of Jesus, He for one last time calls upon His hearers to believe in His words, if for no other reason than His miraculous works. Jesus is clear and concise as He reiterates; He has come from God, and He speaks for God (vv. 49-50), His words are God's commandment, and His commandment is the means to eternal life (vv.49-50). To believe in the word of Jesus is to believe in the Father; to see Jesus is to see the Father (vv.44-45). If one believes in Jesus, he obeys His words. If one does not believe in the words of Jesus, he disobeys the commandment of God and fails to enter into eternal life. Instead, the words of Jesus become the basis of the unbeliever's eternal judgment.

III. Conclusion

Are we so different from these rulers? Are we willing to take up our proverbial cross and suffer for the cause of Christ in expectation of the praise that can only come from God? When was the last time we shared our faith or spoke out against any of the

immoral conduct that has become so commonplace in our country and world? Are we guilty of being members of the fraternity of “Silent Christians? The unbelieving world cares very little about what we believe, as long as we keep quiet about it. But just as we have seen in this text, even when we do not speak, God’s sovereign will shall prevail.