

Series: Questions  
Title: How Can Ye Believe?  
Text: John 5: 44  
Date: June 15, 2014  
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

We return this morning to our “Questions” series—questions God asked of sinners. We will be jumping way ahead in the scriptures for this question. God our Savior, the Lord Jesus asks the question to a group of religious men.

**John 5:44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?—or from the only God or from the only begotten Son of God.**

The Lord Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day. Then he commanded the man to take up his bedroll and walk. When the Jews saw the man they accused the man of breaking the law of God. After hearing that it was Christ who healed this man on the Sabbath and commanded the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath, the Pharisees did not honor, glorify, the Lord Jesus for working this miracle. Instead, they persecuted Christ with their tongues, reproaching and reviling the Lawgiver as a lawless, sinful man. Not only that, these men who spoke so highly of their zeal for God’s law, sought to slay the Lawgiver. The Lord Jesus declares plainly what their problem was. This is the problem of all who will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**John 5: 44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?**

The Pharisees gave honor and glorified one another and sought glory and honor from one another—rather than seeking the honor that the God alone gives to his true sons and daughters, who honor and glorify him.

**Proposition:** A sinner cannot believe on the Lord Jesus while seeking honor and glory for self.

Sinners who covet the honor and praise of men, who covet for themselves that honor which belongs to God, will not and cannot believe on the Lord Jesus. All who covet honor for self are idolaters. They want men to glorify them rather than giving God all the glory by resting in Christ.

Men will be religious, just so long as their religion allows them room to glory in themselves. But Christ says men cannot believe on him who seek honor one from another rather than that honor that comes from the only true God. The desire for the praise of men prohibits faith in Christ. The idolizing of self is the death of faith in Christ. Wherever you find a man attributing one aspect of salvation to self you will not find him resting in Christ alone. If we would seek the honor which comes only from God, then we must worship God in Spirit, glory only in Christ Jesus, and place no confidence in our flesh. (Php 3: 3)

Let’s go back to the beginning and hear what the Lord taught and see the honor that comes from God. And we will see how men seek honor from one another, rather than seeking the honor that comes from God.

**I. FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE HONOR THAT COMES FROM GOD TO HIS CHILDREN IS JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD AND HIS FREE SALVATION—John 5: 17: But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.**

**Note:** This was Christ’s answer for why he healed a man on the Sabbath day.

**Christ Works the Works of God**

By this statement, Christ declared that he is God. It means he is God the Son, equal with the Father. It means he is sent of God his Father. Secondly, Christ declared that his Father had not ceased to work from the beginning, even on the Sabbath day. Therefore, being one with the Father, so had he. It means the works of his Father and his works are one.

**John 4: 19: Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20: For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.**

From eternity, God the Father and God the Son were one in the everlasting covenant of redemption; from eternity, the Father loveth the Son; from eternity, the Father showed him all things that the Father himself doeth in saving a people for his own honor and glory. Therefore, from the beginning, the works Christ worked in this earth and the works he continues to work from his resurrected throne in glory, are the works of God his Father which the Father sent him to do.

God the Father sent his Son to work his works: to fulfill the law, to redeem his people from the curse of the law, to bring all glory and honor to God alone. Now from his throne in glory: Christ is still doing the works of his Father: quickening and calling his redeemed and making us the righteousness of God in him through faith.

John 9:4: I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

### **Christ Quickens Dead Sinners with the Father**

Christ declared that is what was pictured in healing the lame man and making him to walk on the Sabbath day. It showed his power and work, together with his Fathers, in raising dead sinners to life.

**John 4: 21: For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will...25: Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26: For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;**

This is what we see typified in raising the lame man to walk. The man was lame all his life—this is our case, dead in trespasses and in sins. But the lame man was healed when Christ spoke—Christ alone speaks life into dead sinners.

Christ is teaching his accusers and us, that he is God, the Christ, the Sabbath rest, the end of the Law for Righteousness, the Life, the Salvation sent of God for his people. That is what he declared by healing the lame man on the Sabbath day.

### **Seeking to Honor God**

Then Christ declares that the only way to honor the Father is by honoring the Son.

**John 5:22: For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.**

These Jews were seeking the honor that comes from one another rather than seeking the honor that comes from God alone. How do I seek the honor that comes from God alone? Christ declares it here.

**John 4: 23: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. 24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, ...**

That is how you honor God—you honor God by honoring the Son, by hearing Christ's word, by believing on Christ you believe on God who sent Christ.

### **Honor that Comes from God**

And those who honor God, God honors.

1 Samuel 2:30: Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith,...them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Here is the honor which comes from God, which only God can give, which he only gives to those who believe in his Son.

**John 4: 24:...hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

Those who honor God by believing on his Son, God honors by giving us everlasting life. By assuring our hearts we shall not come into condemnation, by assuring us we have passed from death unto life.

Believer, do that which Christ has commanded: believe on Christ, rest in Christ, honor Christ in your daily lives, no matter how men object. Doing so is to honor God. And those who honor God the Father by believing on God the Son, God honors with everlasting life.

**II. SECONDLY, SEE IN THESE RELIGIOUS MEN WHAT IT IS TO SEEK HONOR FROM MEN, RATHER THAN GOD—John 4: 18: Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**

### **Honoring the Sabbath**

First, they sought to kill Christ because to them he had broken the law of the Sabbath. These men only knew the law in the letter. But they missed the shadow set forth in the law of the Sabbath.

Colossians 3: 16: the Sabbath [is] a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

In the fourth commandment of the ten commandments, the Jews were commanded to rest on the Sabbath day because after creating the world in six days, God rested on the seventh day from all his works. That was a shadow, a type, glorifying and honoring God in Christ. When God rested in the beginning, in the Sabbath, it shadowed God resting from all his works of salvation from eternity in his Son.

IN eternity when Christ agreed to finish the works, in the decree and purpose of God, the works of salvation were finished from the foundation of the world. Likewise, believers rest from all our works when we are brought to believe on Christ.

Hebrews 4: 10: For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

Christ is the Sabbath

The second reason these men wanted to kill Christ, goes hand-in-hand with the first, it was because he declared he is the Son of God, making himself equal with God. Again, they were so angry they missed the whole reason Christ said that, they missed gospel Christ declared. Christ declared to them that though the works were finished in the decree and purpose of God from eternity, he had come to work those works which the Father sent him to do. “My Father works hitherto, and I work.”

Gal 4: 4: When the fullness of time was come, **God sent forth his Son** made of a woman, made under the law, 5: to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Christ accomplished the work. He fulfilled the law. Christ redeemed his people from the curse and bondage of the law. Christ is the Sabbath rest of his people because he is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

### **Seeking Honor from One Another Rather Than God**

But these men would not and could not hear Christ and believe on Christ because their hearts and minds were set on doing the law themselves. They sought for themselves the glory that belongs to God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ in fulfilling the law. They wanted the honor that comes from men for all their law-keeping and they expected God to honor them as well. But they were so focused on being honored by one another, they failed to honor the Father by believing on his Son.

**Joh 5:44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?**

Many are zealous in religion. But it is not according to knowledge. They are ignorant that God’s righteousness is Christ. So they go about to establish their own righteousness and do not submit to Christ. So they never cease from their works. (Romans 10: 3-4)

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Christ even told them that righteousness comes by believing on him, in almost the same words as Paul in Romans 10, but they were too busy seeking their own glory to hear and believe. (Rom 10: 9-10)

John 5: 24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 10: 9: If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Righteousness is not by your doing—righteousness is given us freely through faith in Christ our Righteousness. Christ is our Sabbath rest—in Christ we rest from our works of the law.

### **Christ’s Honor to Work Obedience**

The other thing these men missed came in the healing of the lame man on the Sabbath day. In the lame man we see that Christ alone heals his people, bringing us to rest in Christ our Sabbath and obey him. The lame man had been lame 38 years. Those Christ came to save are lame. Dead in sins.

The lame man had tried by his own strength to enter a pool of water, hoping to be saved thereby. He was like these men, like all men lost in their sins: lame, working to save themselves by the law. But when Christ came and healed him, he ceased from his works. Then the man had rest from those works because Christ had done the work of healing him.

We who believe, cease from our works, from our seeking to justify ourselves by the deeds of the law and we rest in Christ our Sabbath because Christ has finished the work of healing us and making us righteous in him.

Then the lame man obeyed Christ—he arose and walked in the Sabbath, carrying his bedroll, as Christ commanded, showing forth what great things Christ had done for him. Christ makes the believer willing to truly obey him, to rest in Christ our Sabbath, to walk in him by faith, declaring Christ and the wonderful works by which he healed us.

### **Seeking Honor from One Another Rather Than God**

But again these men missed Christ because they sought the honor that belongs to Christ alone. They sought to discipline the lame man into obedience, even as they did Christ himself. By that they sought the honor that belongs to Christ alone, they sought to be honored by men for what they constrained others to do. They would not bow to Christ lest they themselves should have to suffer losing that honor, lest they should suffer persecution from their self-righteous companions.

Galatians 6: 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13: For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

### **John 5: 44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?**

Brethren, we carry around a legal Pharisee on our old man of flesh. If we begin to attempt to force others into obedience, we seek the glory which is not ours but belongs to Christ. Doing so, we will not be able to believe Christ and trust him to do the work only he can do in the heart.

And when he has made a man desire to honor Christ lets not be too critical of them. If a fellow believer desires to help you with a work do not reject them because they do not do the work up to your standards. When is the last time you did anything up to God's standard? But God receives it because it is from a heart he has made, a heart which desires to serve Christ in love and honor him. So likewise receive your brothers help though it does not measure up to your standards.

Galatians 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4: But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Believe on Christ, rest in Christ from trying to justify yourself, and trust Christ to work obedience in his people. God honors those who honor his Son. **Amen!**