

The Anatomy of Unbelief
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 10:25-27
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 10, looking this morning again at a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ we find there in the tenth chapter of John. We've been looking at this passage for a number of weeks, and this morning we're going to focus on Verses 25-27. The title of the message is 'The Anatomy of Unbelief'. We're going to see that in the passage Jesus twice emphasizes the fact that the reason that so few are receiving Him is they will not believe. "You do not believe," repeated twice. Once in Verse 25, once in Verse 26. "Though I told you, you do not believe. Though I showed you, you do not believe."

Now we want to understand because the text lays before us some important descriptive elements of unbelief. We want to understand what unbelief is, and what terrible condition it represents. I use the phrase 'The Anatomy of Unbelief', it wasn't one of my favorite subjects in school, Biology. I hated Biology actually. All that rote memory of class, and genus, and species, and all that stuff. The most uninteresting animals too. You spend so much time on the amoebas and things like that. Anyway, sorry if you are a Biology lover. Forgive me, it is my weakness. It certainly is God's handiwork and we ought to appreciate it more. I think I do more than I used to, but I never enjoyed cutting things up. The cutting up of the worm, or the frog, or the cat, all that stuff was no fun to me, but I'm glad some people enjoy it. Maybe not enjoy it, but get something out of it, because Anatomy is an important science. The study of the human body has led to great blessing. God has given us that understanding through the years, and recent years, how much we benefit from medical science and their study of the body, how it functions, and the maladies and diseases that afflict the body, and how they are to be treated. When you understand the inner workings of the disease, you can treat the disease. That is really I think the purpose of why Jesus exposes this truth to us here, is that we might, in a sense, dissect it, understand it, so that we'll not be discouraged by unbelief. As believers, when we take the Gospel to those around us, and we share with them, and they don't believe, this passage has encouragement for us. Basically, it shows us that the nature of unbelief is such that we should not be surprised by that. So that is one of the applications.

Another application is that when we really understand, and we look at, and we cut into, and we dissect unbelief, we ought to be staggered and amazed that today we are believing. It ought to magnify the glory of our Savior, that He has taken us

from this malignant malady to life. So with those thoughts in mind, let's look at this passage. We are going to read the entire passage, Verses 22-30, but we are going to focus on Verses 25-27.

John 10:22-30 ~ At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we come to You today rejoicing that You have revealed Yourself to us, that You have disclosed to us Your heart, Your nature, the richness of Your mercy, the miracle of Your grace. We're also thankful Lord, that You have spoken with great clarity about our condition, and we pray that You would open our eyes now, that You would open the ears of everyone in this room to hear, to understand, to see, and to believe, and to submit to Your glorious word. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

'The Anatomy of Unbelief'. In this passage, the things that Jesus says here in response to that ridiculous question of the Jews who surrounded Him, in an act of aggression, surrounded Him and said, "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus' response, we looked at last time, was basically two-fold. "I told you and I showed you. I told you plainly in saying that I am the Good Shepherd, that I am the Messiah, and all the other times I've said it too. But specifically, right before this, the last time I was in Jerusalem, I told you, and I have been showing you again, and again, and again. The issue is that you will not believe." There is no deficiency in Jesus, the issue, the deficiency is in us, and in the horrible condition of the man born in sin which we all were, and are if we've not yet been saved. Now I want us to see there are six characteristics of unbelief, as we look at the condition. Six characteristics of unbelief.

1) Unbelief is Entirely Irrational:

The first is that unbelief is entirely irrational. Unbelief is completely, and in every way, foolish. It is ridiculous. In fact, that is the attitude of the Bible throughout to unbelief. I mentioned last time that we always ask the wrong question, that was the title of the message last week. We always ask the wrong question, “Why have You not been more clear? Why have You not been more open, Lord?” And God basically turns it around to us and says, “Why have you not been more open? Why can you not believe?” With so much abundant clarity! With the heavens declaring day after day the glory of God and the creation, the reason we should love Biology more. If you study any creature, any living thing, any plant, even the single-cell animals that I hated studying, the amoebas, and the paramecium, those things come back. Isn't it wonderful that you remember those terms? I haven't used the word '*paramecium*' in probably 20 years. There it is! Little hairy things, remember? We looked at them under a microscope. But anyway, that was not in my notes, you might have figured that out. But you study those things, and the more they study these things, the more they see the complexity of it. That is one of the things that unearths or destroys the whole principle of evolution. Evolution is the idea that everything evolved from one single-cell animal, and that the single-celled things are very basic, simple, and the larger animals are more complex. The reality is the single-celled entities are incredibly complex. There is no increasing complexity, well there is increasing complexity, but not on the order that the single-celled animal does processes that stagger our abilities to understand them. People can spend their whole lives studying just one single-celled animal, and not exhaust all the knowledge there.

So God has put into everything He's made, the clear evidence that He is. So unbelief is irrational, and that is what Jesus is saying. “I have told you and I have showed you, and you do not believe. In the face of overwhelming evidence, you do not believe.” In fact, it is important to pick up on this word. The word '*believe*' is used over 90 times in the Gospel of John, by far more than any other book in the New Testament. The closest is like three times less than that, in the upper 30's, other books. John uses the word over 90 times and his whole Gospel is aimed at producing faith. He has written these things so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Well the word '*believe*' in the Greek is the word '*pisteuō*' and it comes from a word '*patho*' which means '*to convince, or to persuade*'. That is the original, the root word of the word '*believe*' means '*to persuade, to convince, to win over*' so that the verb '*believe*' means '*to be firmly convinced, to have a firm persuasion to*

the truth, voracity, or reality of something'. It is not a light thing, it's not just accepting it, giving ascent to it. It is a firm persuasion, to be convinced of something. In reality, the word has something of a legal overtone, to be convinced. John is trying to get his audience, and us in turn, to render a verdict. He is trying to convince us that Jesus is the Christ. His whole book is aimed at that. So he is laying out evidence after evidence, and the desire is: Believe. That is, be convinced that Jesus is who He said He is. Let the weight of the evidence fall upon you and accept it. John has crafted this Gospel to press upon really an avalanche of evidence. In fact, in the text itself, when Jesus says in Verse 25:

John 10:25-26 ~ "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe..."

That word *'testify'* is also an important word. We've talked about it some in previous messages because we keep coming upon it. The word *'testify'*, *'testimony'*, *'bear witness'*, is all the same Greek word, and it occurs almost 50 times in this Gospel again. This word is way more in John than any other book in the New Testament. So *'believe'* is way more, and the words for *'testify'*, *'testimony'*, *'bear witness'*, way more than any other book in the Bible. It is because of the legal motif that runs throughout John's Gospel. He is presenting testimony. He is having people testify, to bear witness. He wants to convince us, the readers, that He is truly who He says He is. He parades witness, after witness, after witness. Not only does he parade witnesses who are giving eye-witness testimony, but then he shows us exhibits. "Look at this Exhibit A. Look what Jesus did, He turned the water into wine. Exhibit B, He healed a nobleman's son. Exhibit C, He healed a man that had been lame for 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda. Exhibit D, He created food for 5,000 men, probably 20,000 people, the amount to feed them out of 5 loaves and 2 fish. Exhibit E, He walked on water. Exhibit F, He healed a man born blind." Then His seventh exhibit is going to be He is going to raise a man from the dead.

All of this evidence, this avalanche pouring on people, and they sit there, and they see it, and they don't believe. That is irrational. That is completely ridiculous, and yet that is what is happening. As Jesus preaches and teaches there in Jerusalem, the majority of people are rejecting Him. This avalanche of testimony, you know they are sitting there acting like they are objective, "We just want to believe the truth. I just want to believe the truth. Prove it to me, are You the Christ? Tell us plainly." It is like Jesus has been telling them, and telling them, and telling them. It really is, when you look at it from God's perspective, it is utterly, it is farcical. It is like slapstick. Three stooges kind of stuff! Jesus is basically saying, "I am the Christ,"

demonstrating, “I am the Christ.” “Hey, are You the Christ?” “I am the Christ. I am the Christ. I am the Christ.” “Will You please be clear? Are You the Christ?” That is what is happening. That is the tenor of God’s word here, the Spirit testifying, and that word, “I said ‘*testify*’ again, and again, and again.” John 5 uses this word over, and over, and when He says, “You searched the Scriptures daily, you believe that they are true, that in them you have life, but these all testify of Me. You believe in Moses, Moses testified of Me. The works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. You want to believe who I am, look at My works, look at Moses, look at the Bible, and listen to Me!” So it is insane.

Now I say that because we should understand what we’re dealing with. When we take the Gospel to an unbeliever, in the final analysis, the evidence is not going to be determinative. I’m not going to say the evidence doesn’t matter, it does matter. God gives us the evidence, this whole book is about evidence, but in the final analysis there is the sense in which we must realize what we are up against. We have to do the impossible in evangelizing. You have to convince the invincible. You have the most convincing message that the world has ever seen.

I love this, you see it again and again. I saw a book recently, a title that intrigued me online. I haven’t ordered the book yet, Cold Case. You might have seen this, somebody wrote the book Cold Case. You know cold cases are cases that have been like buried away for a long time. They get them out and they try to solve them. Cold Case: A Forensic Expert Examines the Evidence for the Resurrection. The guy is going back to look and see, what does the evidence really say about Jesus Christ? You know what I think that book is going to say? That book is going to say, “He’s the Christ! I didn’t believe it, but I started checking it out, and He is!” History is filled with person, after person, after person who went from skeptic to adoring worshiper of Jesus Christ. All it takes is looking at Him and God doing the work. We have to remember, to become a Christian is no small thing. It is a giant thing! Because we are so hardened, we’re so blind, and we need to not have misplaced indignation. We always ask the wrong question, last week we talked about that, but we always get indignant about the wrong thing. God needs to do no more to communicate who He is. We should never be indignant that God hasn’t done more. We should always be indignant that we need so much, and that is what Jesus is teaching us here.

We see this, and it is just all over the place, but one thing that has happened in my life, when I was in college, at a Christian college, ironically a Baptist college. Since then, it has cleaned up a little bit, gotten a little more theologically sound and conservative, but I went to a Baptist college here in the state of Georgia, thinking it

would be a good place to go. It wasn't a safe place at all for Christian faith. There were so many unbelievers on the faculty, it was staggering. They were still the holdovers from, and I got taught in Biology class, and others, that this thing about six-day creation is ridiculous. They weren't even theistic evolutionists, they were just evolutionists, materialistic evolutionists getting paid by the Georgia Baptist Convention.

So it is just completely irrational. They thought it was truly insane to believe in Christianity. Their idea was, "I just want to be an objective scientist, and you young people should want to be objective, and just look at the facts objectively without the prejudice of the Bible." Okay? That was their message, "If you look at the facts, and you look at the facts without a prejudice, then you will realize it is clear, naturalism shows us an observable scientific fact that we evolved from a single-cell animal. There is no sense of design. That is all foolishness, it is mythology." That is what they were teaching, and that you would have to be a fool to believe in the Bible.

Well the reality is, in just those 25 years it has become abundantly clear in the scientific literature, now they are still not accepting it, but more and more scientists are saying, "What is abundantly clear, as we look at the evidence without prejudice is, that the world is not made up of just blind processes, that there is information imbedded all throughout the cosmos. The cosmos, all throughout, information is there that the way things operate are too complex for there not to be design." It is the argument of intelligent design. So the intelligent design is becoming more and more acceptable. There are still people rejecting it, but many scientists have accepted it. But you know what happened? When they accepted the intelligent design, do you think that solved the problem? No, they still are unbelieving. When they could hide behind naturalism, they rejected it because Christianity is mythology, but take that away and they just run and hide behind something else. "It's too hard. It's too unloving. The God of the Bible? We know there is a God, or there is something, or there are aliens, or something putting things together that is greater than us, but it is not Jesus." That is because the unbeliever is irrational! It is a mind problem. It is a heart problem. So that is the first thing we see. Unbelief is irrational. In the face of evidence, though these things testify, you do not believe. You are not convinced.

2) Unbelief is Continual:

Secondly, unbelief is continual. Not only irrational, but it is continual. “You do not believe,” Verse 25. “But you do not believe,” Verse 26. Those two verbs are in the Greek present tense. Remember the Greek present is different than the English present. In English, tense is all about time—past, present, future. That is what tense is about in English. In Greek, tense is more about the kind of action than the time of action. It is about time, but it is mostly about kind of action. The present tense in Greek emphasizes ongoing continuous action. When the author uses a present tense, he is emphasizing ongoing continuous action, so *‘do not believe’* is in the ongoing continuous present. The point is made forcefully. He is basically saying, “I told you and you are not believing.” Do you hear the difference? That is our present participle in English. “You are not believing.” Not, “You do not believe.” “You are not believing.” Verse 26, “You are not believing because you are not of My sheep.” And you add to that the tense of the word *‘testify’*. I want to mention the word *‘testify’* in Verse 25. “These testify...” Actually, “These are testifying of Me.” The Greek present. In fact, the word *‘do’*, when Jesus says, “The works that I *do* in My Father’s name,” that is Greek present again. He is really saying, “The works that I am doing in My Father’s name, these are testifying of Me, and you are not believing.” That is the force of the language. So the picture really is that Jesus keeps doing the works, He is continually doing the works, they are continually seeing the works, and they are continually choosing not to believe. It is ongoing resistance to belief, continual.

In fact, earlier in John’s Gospel, in John 2:23, I mentioned that John focuses on the seven exhibits, the seven signs, the seven miracles, but really he acknowledges that Jesus does all kinds of miracles. At the end of the book, in Chapter 20, Verse 31 he says, “So many things that Jesus did in the presence of His disciples we couldn’t write them all down. Books wouldn’t hold them.” But in Chapter 2:23, when Jesus is at the Passover, it says, “Many more signs Jesus did, and because of the signs He was doing, people were believing in Him.” When you read Matthew 4:23-25, you see the picture of Jesus’ ministry, how many miracles He was doing. In Matthew 4:23, it says He went throughout all the region of Galilee, and people were coming to Him from Jerusalem, and Judea, from all over Galilee, and He was healing every kind of disease, and every kind of sickness. He was driving out demons. So everybody was just flooding to Him. He was healing, and healing, and healing, and healing. John MacArthur in a sermon I heard him preach on that, said, “You know, if you think about it, there was a sense in which in Galilee particularly, but even into Judea, it was almost as if for a period of time, disease was eradicated, because of the presence of the Messiah.”

Now, think about that and then think about this question. Will You show us who You are? The unbelief is continual. Romans 1:18 says that the unrighteous, that we in our sin suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and there again, the word suppress, to hold down, is in the Greek present. We are suppressing the truth. Unbelievers are continually closing their eyes, holding the truth down. That is what the unbeliever is today. That is what we were before He found us. Now, not only is unbelief irrational and continual, but thirdly:

3) Unbelief is Personal:

Unbelief is not impersonal and theoretical. It's not a rejection of a way of life, though somebody may say it is. "I just don't like the way you guys live. You're hypocrites." No argument there, but it's not about us, it's about Him, and the unbeliever here and throughout the scripture makes a personal decision to reject a Person. They may not think they are, but they are in reality rejecting personally the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an interpersonal act. In fact, you'll notice this in Verses 25 to 27. Look at the personal pronouns *I* and *you*.

John 10:25-27 ~ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

It's all about Jesus and it's all about the individual soul that either believes or does not believe, so that this is the horror of unbelief, as it is really a rejection of the One who is the Son of the living God, who has revealed to us the Father. It is a rejection of God Himself. People want to think it's something different than that, but we need to have in our minds that when they are rejecting, it's that, and part of what we need to do is illustrate that. "You're rejecting God. You're rejecting Jesus." Unbelief is irrational, it's continual, it's personal, and fourthly:

4) Unbelief is Willful:

Something we also need to be clear on is that the Bible puts the responsibility for unbelief clearly where it belongs, at the feet of the unbeliever. God is not responsible for unbelief. Though we believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation, He is not responsible for unbelief. He has done nothing wrong and never could or never will. The unbeliever does not believe because he will not believe. In fact, this is made clear in Verse 26. When He says: ***But you do not believe...*** there is the emphatic pronoun there. The word *you* ought to have been emboldened or

underlined or highlighted, because in the Greek, it's one of those places where he adds the pronoun in. Remember in the Greek language, the verb already contains the pronoun. It's different than in English. In English you have to add a pronoun. *I went*. I have to put *I* there. *She went*. *He went*. The word *went* doesn't have a pronoun with it. You have to put the pronoun with it. In Greek, the word *went* or the word *believe* already has a pronoun. When they write it down, they write an ending that says it's either *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, or *it*. It's already there, and so the word *you do not believe* can be said just with the word πιστεύω (pisteuō). It means *you do not believe*. But what he does here is he adds the pronoun *houmais* (you, plural). He says, "You," and the effect is *you yourselves do not believe*. It's really placing an emphasis on the responsibility. "I have told you. I have shown you, and you yourselves will not believe." It is willful.

There's an analogy here with the *ego eimi*. Remember we talked about the *I am*? It's the same thing. *Eimi* means I am, but he adds the pronoun *ego*, so that it's saying *I myself am*. That's the *ego eimis*, the *I am* throughout the Gospel of John. Here, it's *you don't believe* with that same kind of force. In fact, it's even heightened by that conjunction there at the beginning of Verse 26: ***But you do not believe...*** "The works that I am doing in My Father's name, these are testifying of Me, but on the contrary, contrary to all the evidence, you do not believe." Unbelief is willful.

C. S. Lewis was right when he said that hell is God's great monument to the free will of man. That is the truth. No one will be in hell who did not want to be there. Now, they don't really want to be there consciously. They're insane. They want to be away from God. They want to do anything to stay away from the One true God and His rule over their life. They want to be completely separated from Him. And what is hell? It's the fulfillment of that desire. God says, "Your will be done forever." That is insane. It's irrational. It's continual. It's personal. It's willful, and fifthly:

5) Unbelief is Natural:

Unbelief is indigenous to those who are not His sheep. Jesus says in Verse 26:

John 10:26 ~ You do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

Looking at the unbelief surrounding Him, looking into the souls of all those surrounding Him, rejecting Him, hating Him, He tells them:

John 10:26 ~ You do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

Here we have the glorious truths of divine election, which we'll look at more next time, a couple of weeks from now, and also particular redemption, the mystery of how God has chosen us. Everyone's running as fast as they can toward hell. God offers the Gospel to all. Nobody comes. That's the picture the Bible gives. No one's seeking God. They may act like they are, but they're not really. Romans 3:10 says no one seeks God, and so nobody is seeking God. The Gospel comes, the free offer of the Gospel comes, and who comes? Nobody. Jesus used the illustration of the banquet where the man prepares a great banquet. He tells his servants, "Prepare this great banquet and send out the invitations."

A banquet was a big deal especially back in that day when you didn't have food like we do. In America, we've been so blessed that we don't know how blessed we are, but in a society where you had to work by the sweat of your brow every day just to make bread, I mean to literally make the bread, and kill the animal if you had the animal, a banquet prepared for you, that's wonderful. You'd go to the banquet, and so God pictures the eternal kingdom of Heaven like a banquet that is laid out. It's prepared. Invitations go out. "Come to the banquet." The man comes to his servant and says, "Time for the banquet. Where are the people?" There's no one there. They say, "Well, so and so sent word that he couldn't come because of this, and another one said he couldn't come because of that, and another one said he couldn't come because of that," and the master of the servant says, "Go out into the hedges and highways and compel people to come in that my house may be full."

That is the Gospel. That's how people get saved. No one would come, and everyone's invited. And when they don't come, whose fault is it? It's their own fault. God is completely righteous, completely loving, and completely merciful in just extending the offer of the banquet. Here again, we tend to have misplaced indignation and think God should have done more, and you're tempted to think that even as a Christian, because of the old man in us, that filthy, wicked sin in us. But the reality is if God did what we deserve, He would have never lifted His finger. He would have sent us all to hell. That's what we deserve, and to add insult to injury, He creates us, we turn to sin, He gives us natural revelation, He gives us the Gospel, and we still would not come, because it is natural for us to not believe, that for those who have not been changed by God, the most natural thing in this world is unbelief. It is second nature.

Before we're saved, that means it's our nature to be irrational and continual in personally and willfully rejecting Jesus Christ every time we see Him. That's our nature. It is our congenital condition. That's the whole point of the man being born blind. If you're blind and somebody asks you, "What do you see?" you say, "The same thing I saw yesterday. I see nothing." That's this picture and portrait of man, the ugliness of sin, the anatomy of unbelief, this idea that we really are free, and yet we're bound.

There are two great works in Christian literature, Christian theology, that illustrate this. When I was in seminary, I was exposed to both of them, and I remember thinking the paradox. One was Martin Luther wrote a book called *The Bondage of the Will*. A couple hundred years later, Jonathan Edwards wrote a book in which he agrees with Luther completely on his theology, but do you know what he titled his book? *The Freedom of the Will*. Now, think about that for a moment. The bondage of the will or the freedom of the will—which is it? It's both. It is yes. It's not either/or. It's both/and.

In the bondage of the will, Luther was arguing that the reason people reject God is because their will is bound by their nature. Edwards basically points out, "Listen, let's be clear that people are free agents and they make free decisions. God does not constrain them in any way to reject Him. He offers them freedom, and they freely choose." As Edwards points out, their free choice is regulated by their nature. I mean, think about it. That's obvious, too. If you give me an opportunity to choose a certain kind of ice cream—I'm less adventurous than most people. When I find something that works, I just stay with it. There are like three or four flavors that I don't stray beyond if I have a choice. If we're going to Bruster's, there are just three or four options for me. They've got forty flavors up there, and I'm looking at which ones are the ones that I want.

Well, this isn't maybe the greatest illustration, but the idea is I'm not going to try tutti fruti. Is that an ice cream? Okay, it suddenly hit me that maybe it's not an ice cream. But you can see I've never had it. I don't want it. It's not my nature to want that. I'm going to go with white turtle or pistachio. That's enough about ice cream now. We go according to just the desires of our heart, and we are creatures of habit. So before Jesus changed us, before He calls us to be born again, there is no hope. We will only choose what we want, and what we want is to be away from God. We want to be the masters of our fate, the captains of our soul, and the one thing is we will accept religion theoretically, but we will not accept a God who says, "I want everything that you are." We hate that. We despise it, and nothing can change it, nothing humanly. That's the reality that we have here.

Unbelief is irrational, continual, personal, willful, and completely natural. It is our nature. It's not something that we can unlearn. That's why there's this paradox. Why reason with the unreasoning? But the Bible does just that, and we're called to go out and reason the gospel. We're called to go out and give evidences of the gospel. Why? Well, because the sixth thing about unbelief is:

6) Unbelief is Curable:

Not humanly speaking, not within ourselves, there's nothing we can do to cure it, but there is One who can, and His Name is Jesus Christ. He came into the world so that He could cure the malady of unbelief. Our disease was so bad that it went to the very core. There was no hope. We were perishing. The pernicious nature of the affliction that we had, we were beyond hope. Humanly speaking, it was just a matter of time, but God who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, He came and He made us alive, and that's what has to happen. The reason it's curable is because God is able to make the dead alive. God is able to make the blind see. We cannot make ourselves see. We can't make ourselves alive, but God can, and what this does, though, is it shows us what an amazing miracle salvation is. It's not a small thing.

That's why it's so appalling when Christian pastors and ministers say, "Just give me 15 minutes with somebody and I can make sure they're a Christian. I'll go through the arena of their felt need and I'll convince them to be a Christian." You don't understand what becoming a Christian is. You don't understand what it means to be lost. If you would say that, you're missing something. To be saved is to be delivered from the domain of darkness and to be translated, to be taken an infinite distance, something that was impossible to do, to take us from the domain of darkness and to deliver us and translate us into the kingdom of God's Son. That's what salvation is. It is making a dead person alive.

It's what Lazarus experienced when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." He'd been dead four days, his body was already decomposing, and Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," and suddenly every cell in his body was restored, his heart started beating, his lungs started breathing, and his eyes started seeing. I guess he had bandages all over his eyes, the garments of death over him. He's got all kinds of sticky stuff on him, but his skin started moving and he got up, because Jesus said, "Come forth," and he walked right out of that tomb.

That's what salvation is. We go out to minister to unbelievers who are in the dark, who are dead in their sins, who are irrational, continually committed to that, personally and willfully disobeying God, not wanting any part of Him. We share love with them, and we point them to Jesus, and we tell them about Jesus Christ, and in our telling them about Christ, when He is willing, He says to that person, "Come forth," and it's the same thing.

When they believe, when somebody says, "Yeah, I want to trust Christ," what has happened is God has reached into their heart and He made it start beating. The spiritual heart is beating again. It is a miracle of creation. It is more amazing than creation ex nihilo. God created everything out of nothing. There was nothing and then there was something. Boom. That's what happens when somebody's saved. That's what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 4 when he says, "But God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ," that when God saved us, it's as if He looked into our dark hearts and said, "Let there be light," and suddenly there was light. That's the glorious Savior that we have. Jesus Christ has the power to do that. He came and took on our flesh so that He could destroy sin, and He Himself is God so that He can say, "Let there be light," and He saves. What an amazing, glorious Savior.

He says in Verse 27 what happens to His sheep. What happens is when we're born again, we become His sheep, and there's this glorious transaction of the Father who gives, as He says in Verse 29: ***My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all;...*** The Father gives to the Son sheep, and when Jesus speaks, they suddenly hear. The difference is not because they're smarter. No, they're not smarter. They're not able to see just naturally. No, it's the electing purpose of God, the grace of God, the marvelous grace of God, that He says, "Come forth," and those sheep who were walking away, who were just as muddy and ugly and nasty, sometimes muddier, and uglier, and nastier.

Isn't it amazing how we think the ones that are the muddiest, and the most ugly, and the most nasty spiritually are the most unlikely? God loves to call them, and He says, "Come forth. Follow Me," and they get out of the mud and they start following Him. They still look a little nasty. They've still got dirt and stuff. It takes a whole lifetime of walking with Jesus to get cleaned up. They still fall down, but something happened. The great physician did what only the great physician can do. He made them alive. He healed their affliction. Unbelief is such an incredible mountain to overcome, but we have a Savior who can jump over any mountain. Jesus Christ has come and has done everything necessary. In His giving of His

perfect life as an offering for sin, and pouring out His blood and experiencing in His body, in His human soul, the agony of the wrath of God, swallowing every dreg of the wrath of God, then He makes us alive.

So today, we need to know as we take the gospel that God's got to do the work, but if you're here today and you're saying, "I'm not sure I'm a Christian," what do you need to do? You need to keep crying out to God to do what only He can do. And the fact that you're beginning to understand that you can't do it is the beginning of God's opening your eyes. Just keep looking at Jesus Christ. Keep listening to Him in His word. Keep looking to Him. Keep pleading with Him. "Lord, do what only You can do. My eyes are fixed on You. As the maidservant looks to her mistress, so our eyes are upon You. My eyes are upon You until You shall look and have favor."

That verse we sang earlier—*Oh thou in whose presence, He looks and ten thousand angels rejoice*. Jesus looks and the angels are thrilled that He's looked their way. That's the glorious Savior. Keep looking at Him. He will never fail to look at you.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Our Father, we give You glory and praise, for You are worthy. We confess that we, in our pride and our foolishness, the holdover of our former insanity, we still so often accuse You of wrongdoing. In our hearts, we wonder why You haven't done more. In our hearts, we wonder why You've allowed this to happen or that to happen, when if we saw truly, if our eyes are clear, if we see as You see, we see that the amazement is always at how much You have done. How infinite is Your grace. Lord, help us be people who continually give back to You the sacrifice of praise that is worthy of Your Name and Your works.

Lord Jesus, we come acknowledging that You are everything that we need, that You are the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You are man as man was meant to be, and You are very God of very God. You created the world and then You came to live in the world, and You died. You who gave life and who created life, died, so that you might give spiritual life. Father, be with all of us and help us to treasure our precious Savior more, to surrender to Him because He is worthy, and to worship Him in every part of our being and every part of our lives with greater and greater joy. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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