

## Taking an Honest Look at Ourselves

In this series of articles on John 2:23-25 we've looked at two primary points thus far. First, there were those who chose to follow Jesus because of the "signs" or miracles that he was performing in the hopes that Jesus would provide material blessings for their daily needs (see also John 6). These are blessings that have value for this life only. Their "belief" was not a genuine saving belief rather it was merely a "signs belief." Last time we saw the "Savior's belief." Even though there were those who were said to have trusted in Jesus when they saw his "signs," he did not entrust himself to anyone because he "knew all people" i.e., "he himself knew what was in man." John is pointing, once again, to the deity of Jesus Christ. Only God can know perfectly what's in the heart of man.

That being true, what does God see when he looks at the heart of mankind after the Fall of Adam into sin? The apostle Paul gives us a brief, but sobering, look at this question in Romans 3:10-18. Drawing from a number of Old Testament passages we read: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God....Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Although we may wish that he would, God doesn't "grade on a curve." If mankind is to properly see our need for Jesus Christ—we must have an accurate view of our sinfulness. When we look at the Law of God—if we're honest—we will see how far short we fall of God's *perfect standard* (Matthew 5:48). So, then, we need God's Law to show us our need for Christ.

In Galatians 3:24, Paul writes that the Law is our "guardian" or "tutor" or "schoolmaster" to lead us to Christ. Theologians have pointed out that the Law of God has basically three functions: 1). The Law acts as a mirror

reflecting to us the perfect righteousness of God as well as our own sinfulness. 2). The Law is important in its “civil use” of restraining evil. This speaks of the ways in which leaders, police departments, governments, etc., may be guided by God’s truth as a moral standard for societies. This standard is used to approve that which is good while threatening punishment for the breaking of its laws. This civil use of God’s Law cannot change the heart but it can, rightly understood, protect God’s people and others in society from evil. 3). Lastly, the Law functions as a guide to *Christians*—that is to say for those whose hearts are changed by God’s grace—the Holy Scriptures teach us how we’re to live in order to be pleasing to God. Although the Savior doesn’t entrust himself to fallen mankind, we need to entrust ourselves to Jesus.

As we saw in Romans 3, fallen mankind has no hope apart from Jesus Christ. But, generally speaking, we must rightly recognize that we’re sinners before we’ll ever see our need for a Savior. This is a work of God which only happens when—by grace through faith—we turn from trusting in ourselves and turn to God in Jesus Christ; entrusting ourselves to him. When God saves us, he clothes us—as it were—in the righteousness of Christ (Zechariah 3). When God looks at Christians, he no longer holds against us our ugliness and our black hearts but he sees us *positionally* as if we’re just as righteous as Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-31). But *practically*—although we’re new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), we struggle daily with wicked thoughts, words and actions. What are we to do? As Christians, we have to continue to be reminded from God’s word that we’re sinners in order that, by grace, we’ll continue to turn to Christ daily.

In Isaiah 6, the prophet had a vision of the throne room of God and he saw the LORD, “high and lifted up.” The angels around the throne cried out, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” When Isaiah saw this vision of the perfectly holy God his reaction was as expected: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I

dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament and when he saw the holy God as he truly is, he saw himself as the sinner that he truly is. We need to continue to look to God’s Holy Scriptures to help us to take an honest look at ourselves and our need for Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.