

The Lord's Teaching

John 7:1-24

The Lord had taught salvation by faith, not human ability or endeavor. He had taught that salvation was lodged in him and his work alone. He had taught that salvation is applied according to the sovereign choice of God. These were “hard” sayings for many of his disciples who “turned back and no longer walked with him.”

There was such great hostility on the part of the establishment in Judea that the Lord no longer went there. At least he did not go there for a time. But the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths was at hand and Jesus' brothers wanted him to make a great public display of his miraculous works. They did not have his best interest at heart. They did not believe in him themselves. (7:5)

The Lord did not give into the call of his brothers to make a show of his work. Satan had tried the same thing when he tempted the Lord to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. But he did go up to Jerusalem privately, not openly at first.

Opinions about the Lord varied. Some said he was a good man. Others were convinced that he was leading people astray. But all of this talk concerning Jesus was done quietly. The people were afraid of being caught up in the hostility directed toward the Lord.

At roughly midpoint in the feast, the Lord went to the temple and began to teach. His works were often controversial; some had ascribed them to the devil. But his teaching was the source of much opposition, just as it is today.

On this occasion the Jews were forced to marvel at his learning. They knew that he did not have formal study in his background. They asked, “How is it that this man has learning when he has never studied?” (7:15b)

The Lord Jesus Christ used this opportunity to proclaim the divine authority of his doctrine. “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me,” he told them. If they were really seeking to do the will of God, to be submissive to God's directive, they would not deny the truth of his word. They would have realized that the words of Christ were the words of the Father in heaven above.

He was not seeking his own glory. Glory would come to him by way of his death and resurrection. But as the perfect son of the Father he was seeking the glory of the Father. He would be faithful in this even if the result was continued hostility. And that is precisely what happened.

The Lord then began to preach the law as the representation of God's will. Moses gave you the law, he told them, but you are not keeping it. Notice the pattern of the Lord's teaching here. When a rich young ruler came to him asking how to inherit eternal life, the Lord began by confronting him with the law. He now does the same with the hostile Jews. He asked them, “why do you seek to kill me?” (7:19b) Their desire to murder him merely demonstrated that they were not keepers of the law, as they claimed, but were in fact transgressors of it.

The crowd began to accuse Jesus of being demon possessed. This revealed the depth of their depraved view of themselves. They were Israelites, the people who had been given God's teaching themselves at Sinai. They were not so concerned about the actual meaning of the law, or righteous obedience to it, as they were to make their

peculiar position among the nations a claim to special standing with God.

They had criticized the Lord for healing a man on the Sabbath day. He reminded them that circumcision was performed on the Sabbath which "healed" the child in part. He had merely healed the whole man. And, if that was true they needed to repent of their hostile ways and start thinking in a way that was pleasing to God, and which would therefore produce actions worthy of him.

We must learn as well not to begin to think of ourselves as acceptable to God because we possess a certain identity. We are not acceptable to him because of our nationality, race, ancestral heritage, or unique knowledge and education. We are made acceptable to God when we humble ourselves before him and claim salvation by his grace alone. We must come to see Christ as our only hope of salvation and put our faith in him to deliver us.

