

“Pressing Truth to the Heart”

April 13, 2014

Text: John 8:21-29

God gets pleasure from contrite hearts, that are deeply & humbly sorrowful over their sin—truly repentant hearts.

Isa 57:15=> *“Thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the **contrite** and lowly of spirit’”*

(those who don’t think/act as if they were high/exalted themselves).

Isa 66:2=> *“‘My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,’ declares the LORD. ‘But to this one I will look, To him who is humble & **contrite** of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”*

Psa 51:17=> *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a **contrite** heart, O God, You will not despise.”*

Today, however, we are going to examine the opposite of that=> hearts that displease/offend God because they are proud/self-righteous—anything but contrite.

We will also watch Jesus press home the truth to such hearts, so that they can become capable of pleasing God, by becoming contrite.

We will see Him graciously/patiently teach them, in spite of their rude/arrogant treatment of Him.

In today’s text, Jesus Himself will say, *“I always do the things that are **pleasing** to God.”*

He will also say that God is with Him, and never leaves Him alone, to deal w/ life's difficulties.

This was the key to His power—God's presence w/ Him;

It was also the secret of His comfort/joy=>

unbroken fellowship w/ God the Father.

Would you like to live as Jesus did—knowing God is continually pleased w/ you?

Would you sense God's presence in your life, always there to give you the strength you need, & to comfort you?

The Savior has given us the secret to it all in our text=>

*"I always do the things that are **pleasing** to Him."*

But for fallen man, that must begin w/ a contrite heart that is humbled before God.

As we witness Jesus patiently pressing such truths home to the Pharisees' hearts, we'll hear Him teaching them in a variety of different ways; He will=> notify, explain, reveal, remind, warn, & declare the truth to them.

Jesus will use all these approaches as teaching tools, by which to bring proud Pharisees to contriteness before God.

* **Jesus Notifies** (He teaches by officially notifying the Pharisees of some important truths)

[**John 8:21**]=> *"Then He said again to them [Pharisees—8:13], 'I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.'"*

Jesus notified the Pharisees that their eternal destiny would be exactly the opposite of His own=> He would go to His Father in heaven—they would go into perdition having died in their sin.

That would forever become their lot, because they had died w/ their sins unforgiven by God.

Those whose sins are not forgiven, because they have not believed in Jesus, cannot enter heaven.

Someone: What kind of teaching is that?

Ans: The most important kind of teaching possible, for someone who is destined to go to hell, forever, if he doesn't learn the truth.

Jesus was notifying the Pharisees that He was going away, soon, so that they wouldn't wait till it was too late to seek Him.

The best teaching doesn't simply inform—it motivates people to do the right thing (as Jesus was doing here).

Before this, the Pharisees may have viewed Jesus' statements as nothing more than interesting word-games, as He spoke about being the Light of life, & about rivers of living water flowing from w/i those who believe in Him.

Now Jesus was telling them those weren't meaningless words, and this wasn't a game at all.

The destiny of their very souls hung on what He had taught them during the past week, at the Feast of Booths.

The contrast in their spiritual character from His, would result in a separation, & an eternal destiny, that was infinitely worse.

In the chapter before this, Jesus had specifically said He would be going back to His Father in heaven=> *“For a little while longer I am w/ you, then I go to Him who sent Me”* (7:33).

Jesus was talking about His own death, as the means by which He would return to where He’d originally come from=> the glories of His Father, in heaven.

Not only did Jesus notify them they’d not be able to come there w/ Him, but that they would also seek for Him, and be unable to find Him.

* He may have meant that they’d continue to seek the Messiah, but would never find Him, having rejected Him when He came.

That has certainly been the story of Israel’s history.

* But on an individual level, Jesus may also have meant that these Pharisees, having rejected the Savior, would become so hardened in their hearts if they didn’t believe in X soon, that they would become hopeless apostates.

That’s what Jesus was getting at in Lk 13, when He said=>

“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter & will not be able. / Once the head of the house gets up & shuts the door, & you begin to stand outside & knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer & say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from’” (13:24-25).

* **Jesus Explains** (as He graciously teaches them)

Jesus is now going to explain to the Pharisees why His destiny will be the opposite of theirs.

[Verse 22]=> *“So the Jews were saying, ‘Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, “Where I am going, you cannot come”?’”*

The arrogance of that statement is sickening.

As far as these deluded/self-righteous Pharisees were concerned, the only place where Jesus could possibly go, that they couldn't follow Him, would be hell.

And the Jews believed suicide was such a heinous sin, that anyone who committed it, was sure to go to hell.

Notice that they completely ignored X's words about their own dying in their sins, prob. because they believed that to be such a remote possibility, it wasn't even worth considering. He had shined a spotlight on their souls, w/ those words, seeking to cause them to examine their own sinful hearts.

But they were so scornful/contemptuous of Him, they now redirected that spotlight back at Jesus Himself, speculating that He was talking about committing suicide, & that's why they couldn't follow Him.

Others might have gotten sarcastic w/ the Pharisees at this point; Jesus didn't.

He calmly/patiently explained this disastrous difference between Him/them, that would bar them from ever going to heaven.

His explanation wasn't short/curt, but graciously prolonged
in the hope of enabling them to understand the truth.

[Verses 23-24a]=> *“And He was saying [kept on saying] to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. / Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins;’”*

Anyone who doesn't understand Jesus, might think He was simply saying, “I'm better than you.”

But God doesn't need to say that—it's a self-evident truth.

Jesus' explained that the difference between Him/them which would ultimately send them to hell, was based on the difference in their nature/character, & that was the result of the difference in their origins.

He was from heaven; they were of the world—worldly.

Therefore, they would die in their sins, while He, in His sinlessness, would go off to heaven.

In Jn 7:28, Jesus had cried out in the Temple=> *“You both know Me and know where I am from,”* because they had known intuitively that He had to have come from God in heaven.

They knew, based on His miraculous works & heavenly teaching, that heaven must be the place of His origin.

Now He was asking them to examine the moral difference between Him/themselves, & to consider what that might imply about their own spiritual roots/nature.

That, in fact, is the standard by which God will judge all men=> Himself.

Rom 3:23=> “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Himself].*”

Jesus told them that they were, by nature, “*from below,*” meaning from this fallen world.

“*The world*” is the whole, Satanically-inspired, system of evil that constantly opposes the Kingdom of God.

Scripture teaches us a lot about this world=>

- * It is ruled by Satan himself (Jn 12:31).
- * It loves the spiritual/moral darkness of evil (Jn 3:19).
- * It doesn't want anything to do w/ either X/Xns (I Jn 3:1), & in fact, hates them both (Jn 15:18), and especially so for confronting its own wickedness (Jn 7:7).
- * Its people cannot receive the H.S. (Jn 14:17).
- * It rejoiced over Jesus' death (Jn 16:20).

Can you imagine anyone who is part of the world, and has those characteristics, spending eternity w/ Jesus in heaven?

Eph 2:2 says the people of this world are “*sons of disobedience,*” who walk according to the course of this world—a course of rebellion against God.

The Pharisees had come from, & were part of, that world.

So Jesus told them they could-not/would-not go to heaven, because they would never belong there (heaven would be completely foreign to their worldly nature).

Their whole mindset was worldly, so they could neither appreciate/understand Jesus' teaching.

Unless the H.S. transformed their hearts, & they were taught by God (Jn 6:45), they'd never understand His words.

If they ever did believe in Jesus, they would no longer be part of this evil world-system (Jn 17:16), but would escape from its slavery, to corruption/lust (II Pet 1:4).

Not that they'd never be tempted by it.

But they'd be equipped to resist its temptation as they were filled w/ the Spirit.

Their minds would no longer be absorbed w/ the things of this world, but they'd look to the things above, as Scripture commands Xns to.

They would come to find the world's values, affections, & goals sour to their taste, as they obeyed God's command to=> “*Come out from their midst and be separate, ’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; & I will welcome you’*” (2 Cor 6:17).

All these things are true of every real believer who understands

James 4:4=> “*Do you not know that **friendship** with the **world** is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the **world** makes himself an enemy of God.*

Believers want nothing to do w/ becoming enemies of God, as they once were, nor of being “*condemned along with the world,*” as Paul described it in I Cor 11:32.

* **Jesus Reveals** (as part of His teaching)

Jesus now reveals to the Pharisees their 1 possible way out of dying in their sins=> believe in Him as God incarnate.

[vs 24b]=> “*for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*”

The only way for the Pharisees, or for anyone else, to escape from God’s condemnation is to believe in Jesus as their God/Savior.

Man is saved through faith in Him—alone.

I Jn 5:4=> “*This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*”

So Jesus was calling the Pharisees to believe in Him.

To believe what of Him? To believe what Jesus said that=>

“*I am He* [God].”

This was a word-formula by which God had repeatedly disclosed/revealed Himself in the OT—esp. in Isaiah. It is a 3-word phrase that belongs to God alone, when taken in its spiritual meaning.

* E.g. in Isa 41:2 God said that He had delivered up nations & subdued kings, making them dust w/ His sword, adding: “*I, the LORD, am the 1st, & with the last. I am He*” (the same phrase Jesus used) (41:4).

* Isa 43:10 (God)=> “*You are My witnesses...so that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me*” (same phrase again!).

* Isa 43:13=> “*Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?*”

We also find this phrase in Deut 32:39, Isa 48:12,
Isa 51:12, Jer 29:23.

When Jesus says, “*I am He*” (Jn 18:6), the soldiers
coming to arrest Him will fall down on the
ground.

* Isa 43:25=> “*I, even I, am the one [same idea] who
wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I
will not remember your sins.*”

For anyone but God to apply the words “*I am He*” to himself
would be blasphemy—claiming to be God.

But that’s exactly what Jesus did, because He is God.

When the Jews fully realized it in verse 59 of this chapter,
they started picking up rocks, intending to stone Him
to death.

Meanwhile, Jesus revealed to the Pharisees that the only way to
avoid dying in their sins, was to believe that of Himself.

Anyone who believes Jesus is God, & looks to Him for
salvation from sin, becomes destined for heaven.

* **Jesus Reminds** (good teaching reminds/reviews)

[Verse 25]=> “*So they were saying to Him, ‘Who are You?’
Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you
from the beginning?’*”

**Jesus had just claimed deity for Himself, & said they must
believe in Him.**

Their incredulous reaction is now to ask, “*Who are You?*” and it may have been asked w/ disdain in their voices, as if to say, “Who do you think you are?”

Moreover, they may have been saying, “We are Israel’s religious leaders, so who are you to tell us that we are going to die in our sins?”

Jesus didn’t answer them, except to remind them of what He had already told them about Himself, not only that week during the Feast, but “*from the beginning*” of His ministry.

* Just before this He’d claimed to be the Light of the world.

* He had claimed to be the Source of eternal life, saying of the one who believes in Him, “*From his innermost being will flow rivers of **living water***” (7:38).

* And now, He had taken upon Himself one of the OT statements associated w/ God Himself=> “*I am He.*”

When you take all that Jesus said, & match it up w/ all His miraculous deeds, it’s very clear—He is the God-man.

* **Jesus Warns** (His teaching involved a warning)

[Verse 26]=> “*I have many things to speak and to **judge** concerning you, **but** He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.*”

The Pharisees had asked Jesus who He was, & in answering them, He now added something: He was their Judge.

Jesus has been pressing home to their hearts what they’d view as unwelcomed truths, against which their hearts would chafe.

That's why X used that little word "*but*" in verse 26, not to soften His words, but to strengthen/reinforce them.

Jesus was saying=> "I know you haven't wanted to hear that you will die in your sin; that you cannot come to heaven w/ Me, as you are; that you are part of a world slated for destruction; or that you must believe in Me if you're to be saved from all this.

"And now, hearing that I am to judge you, your sinful spirits are likely to explode in angry rebellion.

"***But***" God the Father is the One who has told Me all this, so you should listen, humble yourselves, & adopt a humble/contrite spirit before Him—and before Me, your Judge.

"It's the truth, & God will see that the truth prevails, whether you can accept it or not."

That is what I mean by X's "*Pressing Truth to their Hearts.*"

Jesus was warning these sinful men that they had no way out but to face the fact, that they were hopelessly doomed in their sin.

As He kept pressing these truths home, they were undoubtedly feeling more/more pressure.

And He had much more to say in divine judgment against them than He'd already said.

His judgment would be unwaveringly true, just, accurate,
in perfect harmony w/ God the Father's judgment,
& w/ no possibility of appeal to a higher court; & no
possibility of His relenting.

In Jn 8:16, Jesus said=> *"My judgment is true; for I am not
alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me."*

This is a sober reality every sinner will face at the
Judgment.

At the end of verse 26, Jesus pictures Himself speaking literally
"into the world"—invading w/ His voice that dark Satanic
system/realm.

This is the evil world system to which the Pharisees
belonged.

He can't keep silent, because divine justice requires that He
forcefully declare the world's condemnation.

He knows it will widen the chasm between Him & the
Pharisees, to pronounce their doom, but He must do
it, because God's justice is at stake & must be served.

It was partly for this purpose, that the Father had sent the
Son into the world, giving all judgment into His
hands (Jn 5:22).

**This is Jesus' solemn warning to the petulant Pharisees who
have mocked Him w/ their question=> *"Who are you?"***

But instead of responding peevishly in kind, X has graciously revealed a way out of the disaster looming before them=> that great word “*unless*”=> “***Unless you believe that I am He.***”

When anyone puts his faith in X, forming a personal relationship w/ Him, it changes hellish disaster, into heavenly joy/hope/peace.

That’s God’s blessed “*unless.*”

* **Jesus Declares** (the final form His teaching takes on, here)

Tightening the vice even more that is gripping the Pharisees’ souls, Jesus now makes 3 declarations about His authority, & His right to judge, based on His relationship w/ God the Father.

1st, Jesus declares that He is God

[**Verses 27-28a**]=> “*They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. / So [because they needed to both realize/accept the fact that God the Father had sent Him to save/judge men] Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I am He...**’*” (here’s that phrase again, meaning “I am God”).

How/when would the Pharisees “*lift up the Son of Man*”?

The word “*lift up*” virtually always means to “exalt” in the NT.

But when John uses it, he always invariably puts a special spin on it, so that it refers to X being exalted, thru His crucifixion.

E.g. Jn 12 (Jesus)=> “*I, if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ / But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to **die***”
(Jn 12:32-33).

The real question here is=> how would the Father cause the Pharisees to know that Jesus was God, by their crucifying Him?

* The answer prob. lies partly in the phenomenal events that surrounded the crucifixion=> 3 hours of pitch darkness, a giant earthquake, and dead people coming out of their graves & walking around (Mt 27:45-52).

* But mainly because those Pharisees on the Sanhedrin knew afterward w/o doubt that Jesus had been miraculously resurrected.

The soldiers posted at His tomb had witnessed it, & they had come back & reported it to the Sanhedrin.

Jesus is telling us in our text, that because of those events, these Pharisees would know He was God—the great “*I am He.*” Knowing that, & knowing He had said that if they didn’t believe in Him, they would die in their sins, why on earth didn’t they become contrite, repent, believe in Him, & become saved?

Because that is the incredible/frightening/insidious power w/ which unbelief can grip a sinner’s soul!

Praise God, at least one of them (Nicodemus) seems to have beaten the odds, believed in Jesus, & become born again, illustrating the fact that God will always save His chosen remnant.

For Nicodemus, the story would have a happy ending.

2nd, Jesus declares that He is in absolute union with the Father

[Verse 28b] (Jesus)=> *“I do nothing on My own initiative but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”*

Everything X said/did was His response to God’s instruction.

That included all the claims He had made about Himself, it included the words He was speaking right then, it included all the miraculous deeds He had performed, & it would ultimately include His judging these Pharisees themselves. Christ would speak all these things as the Father had taught Him.

Jesus never said/did anything independently from the Father.

The cross was His ultimate act of obedience-to/union-w/ God the Father, as He said, *“Not My will, but Yours be done”* (Lk 22:42).

That’s why Paul can say=> *“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to [the Father] the point of death, even **death on a cross**”* (Phil 2:8).

3rd, Jesus declares that He always pleases God

[Verse 29]=> *“And He who sent Me is w/ Me; He has not left Me alone, **for** [here’s the evidence the Father was always with Me] I always do the things that are **pleasing** to Him.”*

Jesus always did God’s will, & that’s why He always pleased God the Father.

* He had left heaven & come to earth, according to God’s will, to please the Father.

* When He began His public ministry by becoming baptized at 30, He told John the Baptist to baptize Him, saying, *“in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”*

God’s voice was then heard saying=> *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am **well-pleased**”* (Mt 3:17).

* Jesus fulfilled God’s Law w/ His every deed, so that Isaiah could prophesy of Him (42:21)=> *“The LORD was **pleased** for His righteousness' sake To make the law great & glorious.”*

He lived w/o ever having violated the Law & sinned, & it pleased the Father, as He magnified the Law by doing so.

* He pleased God by dying for our sin (Isa 53:10)=> *“The LORD was **pleased** To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good **pleasure** of the LORD will prosper in His hand.”*

* Peter said even X’s miracles were signs of God’s approval of Him, as=> *“a man **attested** to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs”* (Acts 2:22).

It’s the business of every Xn to emulate Jesus’ example, so we too can say, “I always do those things which **please [God].”**

This must begin w/ our believing in God’s Son, because until we are reconciled to the Father through faith in Jesus, it is vain to think we can do anything else, that would please Him.

Heb 11:6=> *“Without **faith** it is **impossible** to **please** Him.”*

Then secondly, we must avoid the things that displease God=>
the worldliness which opposes His will, deeds of the flesh,
& pride of all kinds (of talent, of self-righteousness, of
wealth, of dress, of rank, even of spiritual achievement).
Most of all, the proud look & haughty eyes, which Proverbs
says are an abomination to God (Prov 6:17).

James wrote=> “*God is **opposed** to the **proud**, but gives
grace to the **humble**” (4:6).*

These are the humble/contrite spirits we read about at the
outset of this sermon.

Would you have peace/joy, knowing that you are pleasing God?

Do what the Pharisees wouldn't do=> surrender your will
to His will, humbling yourself before almighty God,
and entrusting yourself and your soul, to His Son,
Jesus X.

“Pressing Truth to the Heart”

April 13, 2014

Text: John 8:21-29

1. God gets pleasure from [18 contrite] hearts that are deeply and humbly sorrowful over their sin—repentant hearts.

Isa 51:15; 66:2; Psa 51:17

As we witness Jesus patiently pressing such truths home to the Pharisees’ hearts, we will hear Him teaching them in a variety of different ways...

*** Jesus Notifies**

[John 8:21]

2. Jesus notified the Pharisees that their eternal destiny would be exactly the [18 opposite] of His own.
3. The Pharisees’ very souls hung on what He had taught them; the contrast in their spiritual character from His would result in a separation and an eternal [16 destiny] that was infinitely worse.

Jn 7:33; Lk 13:24-25

*** Jesus Explains**

[Verse 22]

4. As far as these deluded, self-righteous Pharisees were concerned, the only place where Jesus could possibly go that they couldn’t follow Him would be [10 hell].

[Verses 23-24a]

5. Jesus’ explained that the difference between Him and them which would ultimately send them to hell was based on the difference in their origins; they were of the [12 world]—worldly.

Jn 7:28; 12:31; 3:19; I Jn 3:1; Jn 15:18; 14:17; 16:20; Eph 2:2

6. Their whole mindset was worldly, so they could neither appreciate nor understand [14 Jesus’] teaching.

Jn 6:45; 17:16; II Pet 1:4; II Cor 6:17; Jms 4:4; I Cor 11:32

*** Jesus Reveals**

7. Jesus now reveals to the Pharisees their one possible way out of dying in their sins: [16 believe] in Him as God incarnate.

[Verse 24b]

I Jn 5:4; Isa 41:2, 4; 43:10, 13; 25

8. For anyone but God to apply the words “*I am He*” to himself would be blasphemy; but that is exactly what Jesus did because He [6 is] God.

Jn 8:59

* **Jesus Reminds**

[Verse 25]

Jn 7:38

9. When you take all that Jesus said and match it with all His miraculous deeds, it is very clear that He is the [8 God] man.

* **Jesus Warns**

[Verse 26]

10. Christ’s “pressing truth to their hearts” was His warning these sinful men that they had no way out but to face the fact that they were hopelessly [14 doomed] in their sin.

Jn 8:16; 5:22

* **Jesus Declares**

Tightening the vice even more, Jesus now makes three declarations about His relationship with God the Father...

*11. First, Jesus declares that He [6 is] God.

[Verses 27-28a]

Jn 12:32-33; Mt 27:45-52

* 12. Second, Jesus declares that He is in absolute [12 union] with the Father.

[Verse 28b]

Lk 22:42; Phil 2:8

* 13. Third, Jesus declares that He always [16 pleases] God

[Verse 29]

Mt 3:17; Isa 42:21; 53:10; Acts 2:22

14. It’s the business of every Christian to emulate Jesus’ example; this must begin with our [20 believing] in God’s Son.

Heb 11:6

15. Secondly, we must avoid the things that [18 displease] God.

Prov 6:17; Jms 4:6