

XV. Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective
iShare—Encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel
“The Encounter with Counterfeit Believers”

John 2:23-25

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We cannot be saved until we come to Christ alone to trust in Him but when we've come to Christ to trust in Him we haven't come only to trust in Him but to follow Him. We trust and obey.

Prayer:

Father, I pray that by Your grace and mercy this room would be full of those who have said “Christ alone is in Whom I trust and in Christ alone is in Whom I will follow all the days of my life.” Thank You Father, for we need no other argument or other plea. Your Word has revealed that Jesus has died for me. We give You praise in Jesus Name, Amen.

We are in John 2 and in a fifth encounter of Christ with counterfeit believers. It is the counter with counterfeits. Let's hear His Word today. John 2:23-25 says [23] *Now when he (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. [24] But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people [25] and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

We are going through this series and we are learning how to share the Gospel through the encounters of Jesus. We are in our fifth study. In this one you may feel a little bit of a disconnect here. Do you remember what it said in the Gospel of John? How many times does Jesus say in the Gospel of John “These things have I written that you might believe in Him and that by believing you have eternal life”? Here in the text I just read many believed in His Name but He did not entrust Himself to them. I thought the whole objective was that if they believe in You then You give Yourself to them and they have eternal life because You are life, yet they believed and He didn't.

If you don't mind I'd like to validate the money I spent on studying Greek because there is an interesting word play here. They (Greek word) *episteusan* believed or trusted in His Name but He did not *episteuen* (same word) entrust Himself to them. They believed in Him but He didn't believe in their believing in Him. In other words, their faith was not saving faith.

The Gospel of John says that Jesus Christ has come into the world. John 1:14 says [14] *And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* When we try to share the Gospel, we are sharing the glory of Christ with men and women who are trapped in the emptiness of idolatry. We think glory is in idolatry but it's not and we're sharing the glory of God in Christ with men and women when we're sharing the Gospel. We have learned this from encounters.

Encounter number one is when Jesus had the encounter with John the Baptist and the glory of Christ was so marvelous that not only had John the Baptist put his trust in Him, believed in Him, followed Him and was committed to Him but was so

overwhelmed that he said “He must increase and I must decrease.” He is the fulfillment of everything and the glory of Christ so caught him up that he knew he had to decrease so that Christ must increase for he knew he was not worthy to even untie His sandal.

In encounter number two we saw the glory of Christ revealed to some seeking students. We see Andrew, John, their brothers Peter and James and the Lord has moved them to seek. As they are seeking they meet Jesus and all they need they find in Jesus. The glory of the Lord satisfied their soul.

Then the Lord revealed Himself in another seeking student whose name was Phillip and the glory of the Lord satisfied him. Then the Lord revealed His glory to a skeptical student, Nathanael. Nathanael was invited to come and follow Jesus and he said “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” He was skeptical about the whole thing. So they told Nathanael to come and see and it didn’t take long for Nathanael to see that this was the glorious Savior. He not only knows where I am but who I am and He will save me.

Then we see the Lord revealing His glory at two feasts – a marriage feast and at the Passover feast. One pastor said you see the glory of the Lord at the marriage feast where He is the Lord of the wine and when you see the glory of the Lord at the Passover feast He is the Lord of the whip. He is the Lord of the wine that fills up tables and He is the Lord of the whip that overturns tables. The same Lord that fills you up is the same Lord that can correct us when we get off. They then saw the glory of the Lord as the relentless Son who would relentlessly move to the obedience of His Father to save His people from their sins. In so doing He fills table with the wine that is glorious that points to His hour, His shed blood and as He cleanses the temple He tells them this is the temple of My Father and its only there to point to Me. I’ll go to the cross and that Temple will be torn down for three days and then raised up. There He reveals His glory as the relentless Son to save His people.

Now before John 2 is over there is these three verses that commentator after commentator skips over but I don’t think we can skip over them because it’s another encounter. He encounters some believers that believe on His Name but what is it that we need to grasp here? These three verses are pretty rich and highly important in the contemporary scene of American evangelical western Christianity.

The first thing I want you to see are three general observations about the text. The first thing is that it is clear that Jesus who has come down from Capernaum to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover has stayed for a season. We don’t know how long He stayed but we’re still in the first year, the opening Spring of His three year public ministry.

The second thing we find out is that while He is there Jesus has performed a number of miracles. John and Paul tell us that when God does something supernatural they call it ‘signs, wonders and miracles’. In that triad statement, those three words, we’re kind of given some insight. In other words, what is a miracle? It is a supernatural intervention of God where He suspends His natural laws to do something supernaturally. He shows up being God. He is not working through normal means providentially but He’s gone beyond that miraculously. So it’s the supernatural. What does the supernatural do? It creates wonder. Why does God create wonder? He creates wonder because He is saying something. It’s a sign that coincides with a moment in the lives of men and women.

In other words, the miracle of the wine wasn't simply to solve a social embarrassment for the lord of the feast and the bridegroom who ran out of wine. This is pointing to Christ's hour. The old covenant has passed away and it's fulfilled in Me. Those stone pots are fulfilled in Me and now something is going to flow that truly purifies you. I will sprinkle you clean with My blood. So He is creating a miracle to create wonder in order to communicate something about Himself as Redeemer and what He is doing to accomplish the redemption of His people to bring them into all of eternity.

Now we're told that while He was at the Passover He did a number of them. So the third thing from the text which is pretty obvious is the miracles of Jesus from the text where many saw them and many believed. They were widely observed and very likely widely reported because it seemed as if many observed it, heard of them, and they responded by believing in His Name. So those are three things we see overall in these three verses. Let's dig now a little further.

What do we know about these people who believe in Him but He does not entrust Himself to them? We know three things about them. First, they believed in His Name. Notice that it doesn't say they believed in Him. They believed in His Name, what He claimed to be. It didn't say they called upon His Name. It just says they believed in His Name.

The second thing it says is that they believed in His Name because of the miracles. John 2:23 says [23] *Now when he (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.* Their faith was in His Name as a messiah miracle worker. Secondly their faith had been promoted, instigated, stimulated by their observation of the miracles that had been done with a number of them being publically observed and widely reported. The third thing is that Christ did not reciprocate to their faith. They believed in Him but He did not believe in them. He did not believe in their faith in Him because their faith was not in Him and they were not believing in Him as a Savior of sinners but they were believing in His Name as a miracle worker because of the miracles. So He does not reciprocate their faith. In other words, their faith was not a saving faith.

How did Jesus know this? Now we will see something else about the glory of the Lord. We will see the glory of the Lord in His sufficiency for seekers, the power for the skeptic, in His overwhelming majesty to a John the Baptist and now the glory of the Lord who knows you. He knows you penetratively and pervasively. The Lord knows the way of the righteous. The Lord knows our standing up and our sitting down. The Lord knows us. As Isaiah said, "In vanity we try to hide in the deep and the darkness our thoughts and our actions but the Lord knows." Here is the glory of the omniscient Savior.

The first thing you see is that Jesus knows. Jesus knows accurately. Jesus does not know mistakenly. He knows us accurately. Secondly, Jesus knows all men saved and lost. In other words, Judas' betrayal did not surprise Jesus. Jesus knows us. Jesus knows inclusively. Jesus knows all people. Thirdly, Jesus knows all things about all men. Jesus knows comprehensively. He knows our thoughts, our words, our deeds, our fears, our desires, our passions that we think our hidden, and our direction that we think no one else knows. In fact, He knows all things about us to the extent of the things we don't even know about ourselves. Fourthly, Jesus knows pervasively. He knows what is within us.

John 2:24-25 says [24] *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people [25] and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.* Why did He know about these people who believed in His Name and didn't have saving faith? The reason why is because He knows all people. He needs no one to bear witness for He Himself knows what was in man. He knows why we are doing what we are doing. He knows what we are thinking in the recesses of our soul, our heart and our mind.

Fifthly, Jesus needs no assistance to know us infallibly. This last week I was thinking about this for the purpose of illustration. I received five different forms this week for references – a couple of them for jobs, for school and another reason. They wanted to know the following about these people and I began to fill them out. I have often thought this is a great opportunity for me to work on my retirement fund, if I wanted to. So what would you like for me to say about you? Obviously I at least want to say what is true about what I know and I always put somewhere “N/A” because I don't know. What I do know may not even be accurate. I can put what I know and what I've observed but I understand why I am getting this for one is about to entrust something to this person I'm writing about. They need information because they don't know them so they are talking to people that do know them. They need some assistance.

Jesus sends out no reference forms for you because He knows you. He needs no one to bear witness to Him. He doesn't need to ask me about members in the church. He won't call you and ask you about me, your preacher. He needs no assistance. He needs no testimony. Now all of us do and that's why we're talking about sharing the Gospel with people to introduce them to Jesus because people need to know. We need to bear witness. We need to give a testimony. We need to share information. Here is the glory of Christ, the Redeemer. Can we share this with you? When they know Him, by God's grace and the intervening work of the Spirit, they will come to Him to trust Him, follow Him and obey Him. That's why we do that but Jesus doesn't need our information.

In fact, when someone with you prays to receive Jesus, Jesus knows whether they are praying to receive Him or not. He knows what is in their heart. He knew these people were not coming to Him as Savior. They were coming to Him as a miracle worker because of the miracles. So what is it in this encounter that we need to embrace, learn and know?

I want to give you three takeaways from this. The first takeaway is saving faith is not the act of a moment. Saving faith is the acquisition of a life. We know that when you come to Jesus Christ it requires a decision but you can make a decision that is not a decision of the heart. You may make a decision that is based upon simple facts that you're nodding your head to but it's not coming to Christ as Savior and to Him alone. That's why the text we read for confession is so crucial. It says not a few but many believed in Him that didn't know Him. They didn't come to Him and there was no relationship with Him. He did not entrust Himself to them.

Matthew 7 says “many, many” going from the normative to the comparative. Matthew 7:22-23 says [22] *On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'* He knew about them and what was all in them but there was never any intimate relationship between you and me. Jesus said it is not simply

those who have said but those who have come to do the will of My Father. This is extremely important. It is a decisive thing to come to Christ but regeneration is not a decision. Regeneration is a life. [17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come* (II Corinthians 5:17).

We come to Christ and put our trust in Him alone. What is the evidence that you have done that? You become a Christ follower. Will you still be sinning? Yes. Will you falter and make mistakes? Yes. Will you be frail? Yes, but when you came to Christ you didn't come simply as the benefits of the cross. When you come to the cross you come to bow to the Crown. You have come to trust and obey for there is no other way. Saving faith is evidenced by obedience. This is why this is very difficult. It is not what you do that saves you, it's only Jesus. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling so you are not saved by your obedience. You are saved by Christ alone but those who have come to Christ, the evidence will be obedience. It's not the cause of their salvation but the evidence of their relationship with Christ.

I'd like to show you this in James 2. There are many texts I could point you to on this but James says it in a very stark way that's almost unsettling of this matter where if there is no fruit then there is no root. If there is a root of a saving relationship with Christ it will show up with some fruit. Some fruit is thirty fold, sixty fold and hundred fold but there will an evidence that is there.

James 2:18 says [18] *But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.* He is not saying that his works save him. He is saying that he is saved by Jesus by faith. Faith is observable. Faith is characterized by obedience. James 2:19 says [19] *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* Demons not only have an intellectual accuracy they have an emotional response but they don't repent, trust, follow and obey. Now here's an example.

James 2:20-23 says [20] *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?* [21] *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* [22] *You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;* [23] *and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, (Genesis 15:6) "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.* How do you know Abraham really believed? When the Lord called him up on the mountain He took the one thing that could have been his idol and he was ready to kill it. His obedience evidenced it. He wasn't saved because of his obedience.

James goes on to say in James 2:24 [24] *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* Saving faith is never alone. Saving faith has evidence to it. James 2:25-26 says [25] *And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?* [26] *For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.* In other words, if you have a body and there is no spirit it's dead. If you have a claim to faith and there is no changed life that's a dead faith, a useless faith, a counterfeit faith, not a real faith. Saving faith has a heartbeat, a pulse, a temperature. It's evidenced with a heart to obey. Is it a perfect obedience? No. Is it a faltering obedience? Yes, but there will be the desire to live unto the Lord and for the Lord. It will be evidenced in one's life.

People try to put James against Paul but they're not against each other. James is not saying you're saved by works or that you're saved by faith plus works. He is saying you are saved by a faith that works. Saving faith works not to be saved but for the Savior. Paul says the same thing he just says it differently. Ephesians 2:8-9 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* So you are saved by the finished work of Christ that you lay hold of by faith that you trust. Then I tell people to write in their Bible to keep reading. Ephesians 2:10 says [10] *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

So to the cross nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. Now because of the cross I follow the Crown. Here is a faltering, failing, sometimes victorious life in Christ that is manifested with a changed life. That's why the works of the God's people while it never saves them is the necessary evidence that their faith is a saving faith, not just an intellectual accent or a momentary emotional response but a rational, emotional and volitional "I know whom I have believed." II Timothy 1:12b says [12] *...for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*

The second takeaway is saving faith is that which manifests the reality that in the Lord we know the Lord, we love the Lord and we desire to follow the Lord but it is not the result of miracle fascination but it is the result of Holy Spirit regeneration. In John 2 it says they believed in Him because they had seen the miracles. They were fascinated by them. Remember there is no chapter division in the original manuscripts. John 2:23 which says "*Now when he (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing*" is a general statement because of the miracles yet they did not know Him. They had not been born again because their faith was a miracle fascination faith, not a Holy Spirit regeneration faith. To get the point across John moves from a general statement in Genesis 2:23-25 to a specific case study.

Let's look at John 3. John has set up the next section. John 3:1-8 says [1] *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. [2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." [4] Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" [5] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7] Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [8] The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

What is he saying? It is not miracle fascination that stimulates saving faith but it is Holy Spirit regeneration that stimulates faith. Can't you see how the pieces come together? If the Holy Spirit falls upon you and you're born again given eyes to see and ears to hear, then who has the Holy Spirit come to bear witness of? It is Jesus. He is saying that saving faith has a singular origin. It doesn't come from miracle fascination or religious observation. It comes from Holy Spirit regeneration. If the Holy Spirit

regenerates you who will you then believe in? You will not simply believe in the Name of Jesus but in Him because He has come to bear witness of Christ. If the Holy Spirit shows up in your life you're a new creation, the old has passed away and there will be evidences of His transforming presence.

The reason He knew these people didn't have saving faith was because it wasn't through Holy Spirit regeneration but through miracle fascination. Therefore they didn't believe in Christ as Savior but they believed in the Name of Jesus as a miracle worker. All of those things were absent and that's why He did not reciprocate. It was not a saving faith. Saving faith is Holy Spirit regenerated not miracle fascinated.

Both of these points I have just made in the contemporary evangelical church we run against this. We call people to Christ and they come down an aisle or come down to this or that and we shake their hand and tell them they're in Jesus. I prefer much more what I learned in evangelism explosion. When someone prays with me to receive Christ I say "If in your heart you truly turn from your sins and put your trust in Jesus welcome to the forever family." Just uttering the prayer or walking down an aisle doesn't save you. It's the Holy Spirit that brings you to Christ yet we quickly give absolution when we don't know.

I like what Charles Spurgeon said; "When a man who was inebriated and known for his intoxication stayed behind at the mourner's bench to pray the deacon asked the pastor 'do you think he was saved?' and the pastor said 'I don't know for I cannot ascertain in a moment what it will take his life to reveal.'" He is not saying his life has to be lived perfectly to get to heaven but if he was saved there will be a change. He is a new creation and that's what he was saying. There will be a fascination not with miracles but a fascination and adoration with Jesus. That's how you know and that's what you're looking for.

If you go home today and have some kind of cable television you'll not only find a teaching decisional regeneration instead of Holy Spirit regeneration that calls you to a decision and a commitment for life but almost every religious program you see will be taken with miracle fascination. They will tell you to send your money and you'll get your miracle. They will tell you if you come to Jesus you'll get your miracle and they do that because they know that we would much prefer in the flesh to be absorbed with miracles than to repent and come to Christ. But miracle fascination will not save you. The Holy Spirit regeneration is what saves men and women.

The third and final takeaway is Jesus knows us accurately, comprehensively and independently. He didn't need anybody to get Him to know me. Jesus knows you. He knows what you think, what you feel, your fears, your passions, your thoughts and the recesses of your heart. Jesus knows what's inside of me. He doesn't need anyone to inform Him because He knows them independently, accurately and comprehensively. That does two things to me. Number one that gives me great comfort, and number two that is very disconcerting to me because you don't know me, but He does.

I'm very indebted to one pastor who tried to point this out and I have just tried to take it a step further and that is almost every relationship that we have is built on a little bit of information and a lot of ignorance. This even happens with your husband or wife. You have a little information and then your intuition took over. If this is true then I believe this, this and this is true and you have established the relationship, right? There is a lot more about your friends that you don't know than you know. There is a lot more

ignorance than there is information. So we get a little bit of information, put a little intuition with it and we establish a relationship but there's a lot more that you don't know than you know.

There is only one relationship that is exhaustively, independently, accurately and fully knowledgeable. That is Jesus with you and me. He knows you and me. That's comforting but it's also disconcerting to know He knows what I think nobody else knows but He knows it. He knows you, your sins, word, deed and thought. He knows all about the warts and pimples. He knows you and He still loves you. He went to the cross and died for you. He will make you new and nothing can separate you from the love of God. God demonstrated His own love toward us and while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly. While we were helpless He went to the cross to save us.

So dear friend who is a believer, don't hide anything from Jesus but confess. He already knows it and He is ready to love you. He paid for your forgiveness and He is present in your life to change you. Confess your sins because you are not informing Him of something He didn't already know. He is ready to forgive you for He has paid for it and He is ready to change you. Dear friend, today if you came here seeking I want to introduce you to a Savior who already knows you and He invites you. He says "Freely come to Me and I will save you from your sins."

My friends, this is Memorial Day. At the expense of many men and women who have laid down their lives, God given freedoms we have the opportunity to enjoy. If you talk to almost any service man they will tell you that the reason most of these service men die in wars is because they were on the line, in the battle and they weren't going to let their friends down. They love the flag but it wasn't the flag flying that said "I'll jump on the grenade for you." They love all the liberties and ideals of this nation but it was the guy next to them that did it. That's why the Bible says "Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends."

This day I want to introduce you to Jesus Christ. No love is comparable to His. He laid down His life for His enemies and He knew you but He saves you. What a Savior! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Lord, the warnings are clear that not all faith is saving faith. Everybody believes, even the devil believes. There is no doubt that people are believers but the question is in who and in what. God it is my heart desire that everyone reading this has come to Christ, not out of fascination but out of regeneration and the Holy Spirit and it will be evidenced by their adoration of Christ and their desire to follow Him. We trust not in ourselves but Christ alone and we have come to Christ to follow Him. We trust and we follow. Thank You for the evidence of obedience and thank You for our acceptance through Christ alone, by faith alone which is never alone because it evidences itself in faltering but persevering lives, devoted to Christ. Jesus I know You know me so I ask that I would freely confess my sins, knowing the sweetness of forgiveness and the joy of growing in grace. May we be such a company here and increase the tribe of Christ's followers, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.