

- I. Human nature, the origin of Jesus, the intervention of God in human affairs
 - A. Prayer
 - B. John 7:25-27 . . . (NLT) Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each other, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? [26] But here he is, speaking in public, and they – [our religious leaders] – say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? [27] But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from.”
 1. Within Israel, at the time of Jesus, there were two prominent views about the Messiah. As we just read, some Jews believed the Messiah would appear out of nowhere, as it were. In other words, they would not nor could not know where he came from.
 - a. But other Jews held to the OT prophetic view that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (see vs 42). This is verified by the fact that the religious leaders told King Herod and the Wise Men that the King of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem.
 - b. However, the Jews that were talking to Jesus on this day thought He was from Nazareth, and so they concluded that since they knew where He came from – and it wasn’t from Bethlehem – He could not be the Messiah.
 - c. And yet, they were completely wrong as to His origin and His position.
 2. Once again, we see the foolishness of making assumptions, failing to verify them, and yet treating them as if they are true.
 - a. I know we’ve talked about this before, but we are so prone to do this that it is worth talking about again.
 - b. Therefore, there are three things I want to remind you of concerning treating your assumptions as facts –
 - (1) First, when you treat your assumptions as true and respond accordingly – especially toward those who are nearest or dearest, you usually make things worse for yourself and for the relationship.
 - (a) You make things worse for yourself by feeding an unsubstantiated positive view or negative view of the

other person which in turn influences how you deal with the other person. In other words, you either overlook problems that you ought to address and deal with, or you emphasize and exaggerate the negative so that you see the person as worse than they are.

(b) You make things worse for the relationship by putting the other person in a box they either don't know they are in because they don't know you are assuming something false about them, or you put them in a box they cannot get out of because you hold so strongly to your assumption that you don't give them the opportunity to clarify or explain the truth.

(2) The second truth I want to remind you of concerning unverified assumptions is that verifying assumptions is as easy as asking a clarifying question or two.

(3) And third, if you cannot verify your assumption, the right thing to do is either set it aside so that you do not think and act according to it, or hold it as a possibility rather than a probability.

C. John 7:28-29 . . . Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. [29] I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."

1. Jesus makes two statements here that I want us to carefully consider in relation to ourselves, and in relation to evangelism.

2. First, Jesus begins by saying that the Jews around Him both know Him and they know where He is from. In other words, they currently have sufficient evidence – from His miracles and His teaching – to know He is the promised Messiah and the one named Immanuel by Isaiah. This means the evidence they already have is sufficient for them to believe He came from God, and not just Mary and Joseph.

a. The reason this statement deserves such consideration is because in our setting today, unbelief is not the result of lacking the necessary evidence to believe, but rather the result of wanting to go our own way instead of God's way. In other words, those who refuse to believe prefer to fear what they ought not to fear, and to want what they ought not to want.

b. Isaiah said this in talking about why Jesus had to die: "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own

way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all (*choosing to go our own way instead of God's way*) to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:6).

- c. The point here is that the unbelievers around you have sufficient evidence to believe. Their unbelief is not based on a lack of reasons to believe, but on an unwillingness to believe because they want their own way instead of God's way.
 - d. And the same is true of us, when we believe in part but not in full. Wherever we distrust God, our distrust is not for lack of evidence to trust God, but because we prefer to go our own way.
 - (1) And in going our own way, we either trust ourselves – first and foremost, or we trust in something that the world offers – such as money or power.
 - (2) Either way, our distrust as Christians is as inexcusable as the distrust of the Israelites who voted 10-2 against going into the Promised Land because they feared for their lives and their livelihood.
3. The second statement that we are wise to carefully consider is that in spite of claiming to know, obey, and worship God, Jesus says they do not know God.
- a. The important truth here is that it is not enough to know about God, or to engage in some of the common religious practices of Christianity and the church you attend.
 - b. What God wants is a changed heart that produces a changed mind, changed attitudes, changed values, changed words, and changed deeds that are becoming more and more conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Since we are studying the Gospel of John, let us look at his first letter to see how he talks about what God wants.
 - (1) 1 John 2:3-4 . . . By this we know that we have come to know [God], if we keep His commandments. [4] The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
 - (2) 1 John 3:4-8 . . . Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. [5] You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. [7] Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who practices

sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

(3) 1 John 4:7-8 . . . Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

d. The point of this is that knowledge of God, the Bible, and theology is not enough. What God wants is for us to be becoming new creations in Christ Jesus. Paul put it this way in Romans 2:13, "It is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified."

D. John 7:30-31 . . . So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. [31] But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

1. As we well know, some believe in God and in His son, Jesus Christ, and some don't believe.
 - a. Often, those who don't believe become hostile toward God, toward Jesus Christ, and toward those who do believe in God.
 - b. And history tells us that such hostility especially comes from those who feel threatened by Christianity, or from those who have had a bad experience with those who call themselves Christians, or with those who have felt let down, unprotected, or abandoned by God.
 - c. And yet, in spite of large scale unbelief and even hostility toward God and His children, some believe and are transformed and go forward to live unto God.
 - d. So once again, let us not be discouraged or deterred in our evangelistic efforts. We are seed sowers, so let sow the gospel and the truths of God's word wherever we go. The rest is up to God and those in whom the seed is sown.
2. Moving on, there is a truth in vs 30 that I believe is too often overlooked or exaggerated to our hurt as Christians. The truth that I am speaking of is God's divine intervention in the activities of people here on the earth.
 - a. According to vs 30, either some in the crowd or a combination of the religious leaders and some in the crowd were wanting to seize Jesus in order to remove Him from the Temple and do Him

harm. And as we see from the rest of the story, the religious leaders wanted to remove His threat to their established system of religion and their position in that system.

(1) And yet no one laid a hand on Jesus, because His hour had not yet come, or in other words, because God prevented them from doing so at this time.

(2) What we see here is that God, who is everywhere present, took action to prevent the intended actions of those in the Temple who wanted to remove Jesus and do Him harm.

b. And for me, the important, the encouraging, the faith building truth revealed here is that God providentially acts within the human realm to accomplish His purposes.

(1) And when I attach that truth to the fact that God is perfectly good, it encourages and pushes me to make Paul's words in Romans 8:28 an immovable anchor for my faith – regardless of how things look at the moment. And Romans 8:28 says, We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

(2) But it doesn't stop there, for if I value spiritual growth as I ought, then Romans 8:28 is not only my immovable anchor, it is also God's promise of something far better to come. For as Paul goes on to say in Romans 8:29 . . . For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.

(3) My point here is that God providentially acts within the realm of human experience for our good – a good that not deals with the situation we are in, but also deals with us in a transforming way that further conforms us to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

(4) And though it is a wonderful thing to have our circumstances brought to a good end – by God's doing, it is even more wonderful to be further conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, may we treasure that which is most valuable more than we treasure relief from our trials or comfort in our tribulations.

3. At this point, I want to return to my comments about the providential activities of God often being overlooked or exaggerated.

- a. To overlook them is to miss God's participation in your life, and in the lives of family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and the church. This hurts us because it feeds a diminished view of God when we ought to be feeding the highest, most noble, largest possible view of God.
- b. To exaggerate God's providential activities leads to exaggerated expectations of what God should do, that when unfulfilled often leads to disappointment with God and distrust of God. And this ought never to be, for God is worthy of our complete trust.
- c. Let me remind you that the same providential activity of God that stopped the crowd from seizing Jesus on this particular day is the same providential activity of God which brought together all the needful people and parts required to unjustly try, beat, and crucify Jesus Christ.
 - (1) And the same goodness of God that saved Jesus on this day is the same goodness of God that saved us on the day He sacrificed His one and only Son to pay sin's penalty on our behalf.
 - (2) My point here is that an exaggerated view of God's providential activities would have us praising God on the day He brings relief from our trials and tribulations, while probably going so far as to curse God on the day He providentially puts us through a horrible experience without any relief – just as He did with Jesus.

II. Conclusion

- A. God is perfectly good. God loves us more than we can begin to imagine. God is all-powerful and all-knowing. God is present – always and everywhere. And God is active in our affairs.
- B. But God is working a good that is far greater than bringing relief from trials and comfort in tribulation. God is working to change and transform us – for His sake and our sake – for in making us like Christ He is giving us life, true life, the abundant life, and life eternal.
- C. May we grow so strong in faith and may our view God be so noble that in our darkest hour we can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him" (Job 13:15), and say with Jesus, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42).